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Honor, Reputation, and Conflict: George of Trebizond and Humanist Acts of Self-Presentation

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HONOR, REPUTATION, AND CONFLICT:
GEORGE OF TREBIZOND AND
HUMANIST ACTS OF SELF-PRESENTATION

DISSERTATION

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the
College of Arts and Sciences
at the University of Kentucky

By
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ABSTRACT OF DISSERTATION

HONOR, REPUTATION, AND CONFLICT: GEORGE OF TREBIZOND AND HUMANIST ACTS OF SELF-PRESENTATION

The present study investigates the verbal strategies of self-presentation that humanist scholars employed in contests of honor during the early fifteenth century. The focus of this study is George of Trebizond (1395-1472/3), a Cretan scholar who emigrated to Italy in 1416, taught in Venice, Vicenza, and elsewhere, served as an apostolic secretary in Rome, and composed the first major humanist treatise on rhetoric, his *Rhetoricorum libri quinque*, in 1433/34. Trebizond feuded with many prominent humanists during his career, including Guarino of Verona (1374-1460) and Poggio Bracciolini (1380-1459). His quarrels with both men illustrate how humanist conflicts were the sites upon which Quattrocento scholars won or lost honor via literary activities designed to appeal to a public audience of peers and patrons. Humanists wrote to denigrate publicly their competitors, casting them as ignorant and morally corrupt, and to praise themselves as eloquent and virtuous. Although Renaissance scholarship has long acknowledged the humanist pursuit of glory, the linguistic means by which humanists contested honor remains understudied. The present study contends that Quattrocento contests of honor were conducted using standard sets of oppositional categories, themes, and literary models. Additionally, I argue that an analysis of the linguistic strategies of self-presentation provides a more complex and complete picture of Quattrocento humanism and of individual humanists as historical figures.

Following an introductory discussion of George of Trebizond and Quattrocento humanism in Chapter One, the next three chapters of this dissertation address individual themes evident in Trebizond's correspondence. Chapter Two examines the anti-Greek language that dominated Trebizond's dispute with Guarino in 1437. Chapter Three explores the language of restraint and rational self-control in Trebizond's feud with Poggio between 1452 and 1453. Chapter Four evaluates humanist concepts of masculinity in Trebizond's feuds with both men. Chapter Five steps back from a deep thematic reading of Trebizond's correspondence to consider invective as a literary genre that was a preferred vehicle for humanist self-presentation. This final chapter studies two additional feuds, between Guarino and Niccolò Niccoli, and Poggio and Lorenzo Valla,

to understand better Trebizond's experiences as a reflection of the broader culture of which he was a part.

KEYWORDS: Humanism, Self-Presentation, Honor, Invective, George of Trebizond

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CHAPTER ONE

HUMANISM IN THE EARLY QUATTROCENTO

Introduction

Renaissance humanists worried a great deal about their reputations. Scholars have long recognized humanists' efforts to seek approbation from their peers and patrons, and recent scholarship has turned its attention to a discussion of humanist anxiety—the constant lamentations about the difficulties of being a professional scholar.¹ The present study advances existing scholarship on humanist honor by examining conflicts between scholars—the sites where honor was contested—and the written correspondence – personal letters and invective—that feuding scholars exchanged. This study proposes to move beyond the idea that humanists were concerned about honor to a consideration of *how* and *why* they fought with one another as they did. What were the strategies humanists employed to contest honor? As erudite, eloquent individuals, how did they mobilize language to meet the demands of scholarly life? What concepts, themes, or categories did they use to promote themselves and challenge the reputations of their opponents? How did they address the problem of audience, namely that one secured honor through one's peers—some friendly, some not? What were the socio-economic consequences of humanist contests and how did they influence the language that scholars used? What meaning are we to take from the often aggressive and denigrating language humanists used?

¹ For the former, see Hanna H. Gray, "Renaissance Humanism: The Pursuit of Eloquence," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 24, no.4 (Oct.-Dec. 1963): 494-514. For the latter, see especially the works of Christopher S. Celenza, including *Renaissance Humanism and the Papal Curia: Lapo da Castiglionchio the Younger's De curiae commodis* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1999) and *The Lost Italian Renaissance: Humanists, Historians, and Latin's Legacy* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004).

In response to these questions, the present study makes the following contentions. First, humanists employed identifiable strategies that involved standard sets of categories, themes, and literary models to contest honor. In essence there was a language of honor that humanists used, and that language is the focus of the present study. The language consisted of contrasts between, for example, prudence and imprudence, honesty and dishonesty, reason and emotion, as well as the contrast between manly behavior on the one hand and womanish, childish or beast-like behavior on the other. Second, humanists modeled their language on examples from the classical Latin tradition, including but not limited to those drawn from rhetorical treatises. Fifteenth-century scholars adapted these classical examples to the contemporary needs of their professional lives. Third, formal scholarly disputes consisted of competing acts of self-presentation generally composed in writing and circulated among an audience of an author's peers. In these compositions, humanists defined themselves in ways that would establish or defend their reputation and defined their opponents in ways that would challenge their reputations. Humanists, then, viewed themselves as exercising influence over public perception and thus as agents in the construction of their own identities. Fourth, humanist self-presentation was a concrete response to the anxiety scholars experienced about the highly competitive nature of professional life in the early Quattrocento. To find meaning in humanist invective and to make sense of the frequently insulting and aggressive language in these pieces, we ought to view humanist self-presentation as a function of the times. Humanists were erudite men with an eye towards their predecessors as well as men who prided themselves on their learning and eloquence. They were well aware of the challenges that faced them in building and maintaining a reputation as a professional scholar, and were more than

capable of drawing on a host of models and concepts to influence how others perceived them and their opponents.

My analysis of humanist self-presentation and honor focuses on the career of George of Trebizond (1395-1472/3), a Cretan émigré to Italy who engaged in disputes with some of the most prominent humanists of the day. To inform my arguments and to establish a sense of time, place, and those involved in Trebizond's disputes, I begin with a series of brief discussions about Trebizond, his adversaries, and the socio-economic and cultural circumstances of fifteenth-century humanism.

George of Trebizond and Humanist Contests of Honor

Trebizond—an accomplished scholar, respected educator, and a prolific translator of Greek texts—is a useful lens through which to view humanist experiences during the early Quattrocento. Trebizond arrived in Italy in 1416 at the behest of the Venetian patrician Francesco Barbaro, and learned Latin from and did translation work for one of the most renowned fifteenth-century humanist schoolmen, Vittorino da Feltre. He composed the first major Renaissance treatise on rhetoric—the *Rhetoricorum libri quinque* (hereafter *RLV*)—in 1433/34 and served in Rome as apostolic secretary to a number of popes.² He worked in many key sites of patronage including Venice, Rome, and Naples, and alongside some of the most brilliant lights of the Quattrocento—Guarino of Verona, Poggio Bracciolini, Lorenzo Valla, Cardinal Bessarion, and Theodore Gaza among others. He was a respected educator. He enjoyed the patronage of rulers such as

² For Trebizond's contributions, including the *RLV*, to Renaissance rhetoric see John Monfasani's major biography *George of Trebizond: A Biography and a Study of his Rhetoric and Logic* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1976), 318-327 and Peter Mack, *A History of Renaissance Rhetoric, 1380-1620* (New York: Oxford University Press), 39-47. For the *RLV* in the early modern classroom see Paul Grendler, *Schooling in Renaissance Italy: Literacy and Learning, 1300-1600* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989), 208-209 and 212.

Alfonso of Aragon, King of Naples. He was friends with influential political figures including Barbaro and fellow scholars such as Francesco Filelfo. Others, including Flavio Biondo and Lorenzo Valla, with whom Trebizond engaged in public debates while in Rome, held him in esteem.³ Trebizond himself never attained the reputation of a Leonardo Bruni or even of some of the men with whom he feuded, including Guarino and Poggio. He was by most accounts, however, a success as he attained both patronage and financial prosperity.⁴ Like many of his contemporaries, he engaged in a number of literary duels. The present study analyzes two of Trebizond's major quarrels: the first with Guarino of Verona (1374-1460) while Trebizond was in Venice in 1437, and the second with Poggio Bracciolini (1380-1459) in Rome and Naples between 1452 and 1454.

The Trebizond-Guarino dispute began when Andreas Agaso, who claimed to be a student of Guarino's, took issue with passages in Trebizond's *RLV* that criticized Guarino's rhetorical style. Agaso wrote about Trebizond to Paulus Regius, supposedly another of Guarino's students. He took up the defense of his instructor and attacked Trebizond's eloquence, knowledge of Latin, alleged abuse of Guarino, and the precepts

³ On Trebizond's friendship with Barbaro and Filelfo as well as Valla's comments, see Monfasani, 3, 104, and 124-125.

⁴ Trebizond's position in the curia was particularly lucrative. Peter Partner writes that "the fees due to the secretaries were also substantial: the income enjoyed from his post by a secretary in the mid fifteenth century was in the region of 250-300 florins annually...and George of Trebizond, at the end of a twelve-year tenure of the office, had over 4,000 florins placed in Roman banks, besides investments in real property." *The Pope's Men: The Papal Civil Service in the Renaissance* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), 54. Monfasani also addresses Trebizond's substantial assets. Monfasani, 114-115 and 141-145.

Trebizond's rivals were successful as well. Poggio Bracciolini, like Trebizond, turned his curial post into financial success. Stephen Greenblatt writes "By the 1450s, along with a family palazzo and a country estate, he had managed to acquire several farms, nineteen separate pieces of land, and two houses in Florence, and he had made very large deposits in banking and business houses." Greenblatt, *The Swerve: How the World Became Modern* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2011), 22. For additional details about Poggio's holdings see Lauro Martines, *The Social World of Florentine Humanists, 1390-1460* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1963), 123-127. Guarino of Verona earned a salary of 300 ducats when he became a public lecturer in Ferrara in 1435 under the patronage of the Este family. Grendler, 126-128.

of the *RLV*. Trebizond believed Guarino had written the Agaso letter and penned a response three days later to Guarino himself.⁵ He attacked Guarino for hiding behind the Agaso pseudonym, reiterated his criticisms of Guarino's style, and claimed to be the superior orator and instructor. His response included a cover letter to the Ferraran prince Leonello d'Este, Guarino's student and patron. Trebizond urged Leonello to arrange a public debate between Trebizond and Guarino to prove once and for all who the greater scholar was.⁶

The Trebizond-Poggio dispute, by contrast, was the result of a public, physical altercation between the two in the papal chancery in May 1452. Both men were apostolic secretaries at the time. Their altercation began as a fist fight but eventually Trebizond drew a sword against Poggio, causing his opponent to flee. Afterwards, the cardinal in charge of the chancery and then Nicholas V himself judged Trebizond to have acted imprudently and without restraint. Trebizond was imprisoned for his actions and upon his release not welcomed back to the chancery. He left Rome soon thereafter for the patronage of Alfonso of Aragon in Naples. Over the next two years, Trebizond continued to write about the chancery fight and Poggio. In January 1453, he presented his account of the chancery fight—a story of self-defense—to Poggio. That same month, he wrote to Nicholas V that Poggio had sent assassins to Naples to kill him. Responding in February

⁵ The authorship of the Agaso letter is not clear. Monfasani questions whether Agaso and Regius actually existed. See Monfasani, 29-30.

⁶ For Leonello, the court of Ferrara, and Guarino's role there, see Werner L. Gundersheimer, *Ferrara: The Style of a Renaissance Despotism* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1973); Marianne Pade, "Guarino and Caesar at the Court of the Este," in *The Court of Ferrara and its Patronage*, ed. Marianne Pade (Modena: Edizioni Panini, 2001), 71-92 and *The Reception of Plutarch's Lives in Fifteenth-Century Italy*, vol. 1 (Copenhagen: Museum Tusculanum Press, 2007), 231-239; Michael Baxandall, "A Dialogue on Art from the Court of Leonello d'Este: Angelo Decembrio's *De Politia Litteraria Pars LXVIII*," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 26, no.3/4 (1963): 183-204 and "Guarino, Pisanello and Manuel Chrysoloras," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 28 (1965): 304-326.

1453, Poggio rejected Trebizond's account of the chancery fight and the assassination plot accusation. In June 1454, Trebizond added another charge, that Poggio and Giovanni Aurispa had circulated forged letters to frame him for writing insultingly about the pope.

Each of Trebizond's rivals was a well-known and widely respected fifteenth-century humanist.⁷ Guarino was one of the most significant humanist educators of the century. His school in Ferrara under the patronage of the Este family was, alongside Vittorino da Feltre's school in Mantua, one of the best of its kind.⁸ Guarino was also a leading grammarian. His *Regulae grammaticales*, written while he was in Venice around 1418, remained in use until the seventeenth century and survives in almost forty manuscripts.⁹ His contributions to the revival of Greek studies in Italy were equally important. Guarino was one of the eager Italian students—alongside Bruni, Ambrogio Traversari, and others—of the Greek instructor Manuel Chrysoloras who reintroduced Greek studies to Italy at the end of the fourteenth century. Guarino was in his early twenties when Chrysoloras arrived in Italy in 1397, and he followed him back to Constantinople in 1403. During his studies there, he translated Lucian's *Slander* and *The Fly*. After returning to Italy in 1417, he published an abridged version of Chrysoloras's manual on Greek inflections, the *Erotemata*, which became one of the standard Greek

⁷ I reserve more detailed discussions of pertinent biographical information of Guarino and Poggio for the following chapters.

⁸ For Guarino, see first the works of Remigio Sabbadini including *Vita di Guarino Veronese* (Genoa: Istituto Sordo-Mutti, 1891); *Epistolario di Guarino Veronese*, 3 vols. (Venice: A spese della Società, 1915-1919); *La Scuola e gli studi di Guarino Veronese* (Catania: F. Galati, 1896). Guarino's reputation as an educator is well documented. Grendler, 126-129; John Ward, "The Lectures of Guarino da Verona on the *Rhetorica ad Herennium*: A Preliminary Discussion," in *Rhetoric and Pedagogy: Its History, Philosophy, and Practice*, ed. Winifred Brian Homer and Michael Leff, 97-127 (Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum, 1995); Anthony Grafton and Lisa Jardine, "Humanism and the School of Guarino: A Problem of Evaluation," *Past & Present* 96 (Aug. 1982): 51-80 and *From Humanism to the Humanities* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986).

⁹ Grendler, 166-169, 191 and 194.

grammars of the fifteenth century, and translated Lucian's *The Parasite*.¹⁰ Guarino settled in Ferrara in 1429 and taught there until his death in 1460.

Poggio rose from relatively obscure origins to the heights of humanist success by his death in 1459.¹¹ Under the guidance of then-chancellor Coluccio Salutati, Poggio worked alongside the likes of Leonardo Bruni and Niccolò Niccoli in Florence. In 1403, at the age of twenty-three and with Salutati's recommendation, Poggio entered the service of Pope Boniface IX as a scribe. Poggio was perhaps best known for his reputation as a book-hunter. In the summer of 1415, he discovered a codex in Cluny containing seven Ciceronian orations, two of them hitherto unknown—the *Pro Roscio Amerino* and *Pro Murena*. In the summer of 1416, he found in St. Gall Asconius's *Commentary* on five Ciceronian speeches, and, perhaps his best known discovery, the complete text of Quintilian's *Institutio oratoria*.¹² In the 1430s, Poggio attained the highest position in the papal service, apostolic secretary, which he maintained for the next two decades under Eugenius IV and Nicholas V. Like his contemporaries, Poggio composed a number of treatises and dialogues: *De avaritia* (1429), *De nobilitate* (1440), *De infelicitate principum* (1440), *De varietate fortunae* (1448), and *Contra hypocritas*

¹⁰ Grendler, 265; Paul Botley, *Learning Greek in Western Europe, 1396-1529* (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 2012), 2, 7-12; Federica Ciccolella, *Donati Graeci: Learning Greek in the Renaissance* (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 101, 130-131; David Marsh, *Lucian and the Latins: Humor and Humanism in the Early Renaissance* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press: 1998), xi.

¹¹ Poggio's major biographers are William Shepherd, whose nineteenth-century work is still the most complete biography of Poggio in English, and Ernst Walser. William Shepherd, *The Life of Poggio Bracciolini* (London: Harris Brothers, 1837); Ernst Walser, *Poggius Florentinus. Leben und Werke* (Leipzig-Berlin, 1914). For Poggio's correspondence and writings, there is Poggio Bracciolini, *Opera Omnia*, ed. T. Tonelli (Basel, 1538; rpt. Turin, 1964). For a recent account of Poggio's life and career see Greenblatt, *The Swerve*.

¹² Grendler, 121-122. Poggio and Niccoli discussed the discoveries of these new texts excitedly in their letters to each other. *Two Renaissance Book Hunters: The Letters of Poggius Bracciolini to Nicolaus de Niccolis*, trans. Phyllis Walter Goodhart Gordan (New York: Columbia University Press, 1974). In January 1417, Poggio discovered Lucretius's *De rerum natura* in another monastic library, perhaps in Fulda. That discovery is the focus of Greenblatt's recent work. Greenblatt, 176-180.

(1447-8). Poggio's *Facetiae*, a collection of jokes and anecdotes purportedly told by his fellow curial servants and compiled between the 1430s and 1450s, was immensely popular. Poggio was also an active polemicist. He engaged in a literary duel with Guarino, the so-called Scipio-Caesar controversy of 1435, and a protracted debate with Francesco Filelfo in the 1430s. His major feud, and the one that garnered the most attention in Rome and throughout Italy, was his extremely vitriolic dispute with Lorenzo Valla (1407-1457), another apostolic secretary, between 1452 and 1453.¹³ Poggio's animosity towards Valla continued even after Poggio left Rome in 1453 to become chancellor of Florence, a position he retained until he retired in 1458. He passed away the following year.

Scholarly life at the turn of the Quattrocento was extremely competitive and rife with conflicts among erudite men—including Trebizond, Guarino, and Poggio—seeking to build reputations and careers. Humanism was a movement still largely in its infancy. Job prospects were limited and students of the *studia humanitatis* in cities throughout Italy were dependent on patronage. Aspiring humanists taught the youths of wealthy, powerful patricians in cities like Vicenza or Venice.¹⁴ In Florence, figures including Niccolò Niccoli and Poggio built lucrative relationships with the ruling Medici family.¹⁵ The Roman curia became a center for humanist activity in the middle of the Quattrocento

¹³ Ennio Rao describes the Poggio-Valla feud as the high-water mark for humanist invective in *Curmudgeons in High Dudgeon: 101 Years of Invectives (1352-1452)* (Messina: EDAS, 2007), 96-97.

¹⁴ For humanist patronage in Venice, see Margaret L. King, *Venetian Humanism in an Age of Patrician Dominance* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1986).

¹⁵ For humanism in Florence see Martines, *The Social World of Florentine Humanists*; George Holmes, *The Florentine Enlightenment, 1400-1450* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969); Ronald Witt, *Hercules at the Crossroads: The Life, Works, and Thought of Coluccio Salutati* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1983).

under the papal patronage of Eugenius IV and Nicholas V.¹⁶ Success as a humanist required appealing to these patrons, presenting oneself as a skilled intellectual, and distinguishing oneself from the competition. The relatively limited opportunities available to humanists meant that reputation was crucial to their prospects as professionals and to their financial stability. Bound by the demands of patronage, scholars exhibited no small amount of anxiety about how others perceived them.

Humanists expressed their anxiety and carried out conflicts with one another through their personal letters and by composing invective. Letters and invective were each immensely popular during the fifteenth century and are of vital importance to understanding how humanists viewed and responded to their socio-economic realities. The Quattrocento saw a veritable boom in the composition of personal letters aided by the recovery of Cicero's letters to Atticus and Quintus in 1345 and his *Epistolae ad familiares* in 1392.¹⁷ The composition and circulation of one's letters quickly became the primary means by which humanists disseminated their ideas and cultivated reputation. Letter collections became the sign of serious scholarship.¹⁸ Furthermore, humanists

¹⁶ For humanism and the curia see John W. O'Malley, *Praise and Blame in Renaissance Rome: Rhetoric, Doctrine, and Reform in the Sacred Orators of the Papal Court, c. 1450-1521* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1979); John D'Amico, *Renaissance Humanism in Papal Rome: Humanists and Churchmen on the Eve of the Reformation* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1983); Charles L. Stinger, *The Renaissance in Rome* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985); Peter Partner, *Renaissance Rome, 1500-1599* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976) and Partner, *The Pope's Men*. Most of the existing literature examines the late fifteenth century. Elizabeth May McCahill's recent study of the papal reigns of Martin V and Eugenius IV remedies this. McCahill, *Reviving the Eternal City: Rome and the Papal Court, 1420-1447* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2013).

¹⁷ On the discovery of Cicero's letters, their use as humanist models, and the role of letter-writing in the cultivation of humanist reputation see Cecil H. Clough, "The Cult of Antiquity: Letters and Letter Collections," in *Cultural Aspects of the Italian Renaissance* (New York: A.F. Zambelli, 1976), 33-67; L.D. Reynolds and N.G. Wilson, *Scribes and Scholars: A Guide to the Transmission of Greek and Latin Literature* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), 128-136; John Najemy, *Between Friends: Discourses of Power and Desire in the Machiavelli-Vettori Letters of 1513-1515*, 25-33.

¹⁸ Clough, 33-35. Humanists including Leonardo Bruni, Poggio Bracciolini, Francesco Filelfo, and others collected and edited their letters, arranging them into collections. For letter-writing as a sign of serious

frequently used their personal letters as a vehicle for invective attacking their competitors. In letter form, they addressed their invectives to a friend, patron, or adversary. Fundamental to the act of composing invective was the author's understanding that his correspondence was anything but private. Ostensibly addressed to individuals, writer and recipient alike expected that once they left the author's hands his letters would be read by a much wider audience. Letters were routinely collected, copied, and disseminated within and between cities. Friends alerted each other to the goings-on of notable scholars, advocated on behalf of each other, and criticized their own adversaries as well as the adversaries of their allies. Humanist quarrels were public contests waged before an audience of contemporaries to whom authors sometimes explicitly but always implicitly appealed.

Historiography

My study of humanist self-presentation during the feuds of George of Trebizond emerges from two specific historiographical conversations relative to the contextual information just discussed. The first involves the competitive nature of Quattrocento scholarly life, the anxiety this created among humanists, and the social practices they adopted in response to their anxiety. Humanist anxiety has been the focus of a series of recent works examining complaints or lamentations about the socio-economic situations in which scholars found themselves. A representative and valuable example of this trend is Christopher Celenza's work on Lapo da Castiglionchio the Younger.¹⁹ In *Renaissance Humanism and the Papal Curia* (1999), Celenza examined the career of Lapo (1406-

scholarship, see Elizabeth May McCahill, "Finding a Job as a Humanist: The Epistolary Collection of Lapo da Castiglionchio the Younger," *Renaissance Quarterly* 57, no.4 (Winter 2004): 1309-1310.

¹⁹ See note 1.

1438), a Florentine scholar who was always on the verge of success. Lapo's major work, *On the Benefits of the Curia* [*De curiae commodis*], includes a portrait of life in the papal court that reflects the difficulties of achieving and maintaining success as a scholar there. Others, including Elizabeth May McCahill and Stephen Greenblatt, have followed Celenza in identifying Lapo as a sort of cultural barometer for scholarly distress and frustration in cultivating reputation and gaining entry into patronage networks.²⁰ Celenza returned to Lapo in *The Lost Italian Renaissance* (2004) where he situated the conversation about honor and reputation in an exploration of the intersection between the social and intellectual worlds of humanists. He suggests examining humanist social practices, specifically the composition and dissemination of their Latin writings, to understand how they conceptualized and measured the honor they sought. He also provides a model for doing so, noting how humanists used "gendered categories in an oppositional way, so that a thinker, in order to emphasize the right kind of behavior or action, will deploy the opposite in vilifying an opponent." For Lapo, this meant charging some in the curia of effeminate behavior—either in accusations of luxury or sexual immorality—and employing a "feminizing antitype" that Celenza explains many fifteenth-century polemicists used.

The present study uses Celenza's discussion of oppositional categories as a starting point and advances the study of humanist anxiety and social practices by examining the verbal strategies evident during Trebizond's feuds with Guarino and Poggio. The correspondence of these feuds reflects a shared set of standard categories

²⁰ McCahill, "Finding a Job," 1308-1345; Greenblatt, 138-141. See also Lauro Martines, *Strong Words: Writing and Social Strain in the Italian Renaissance* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001). Martines examines the use of language to negotiate patronage networks, including expressions of anxiety and distress, but does not address humanists.

used, as Celenza explains, in an oppositional manner to praise the author and vilify his opponent. I add to Celenza's account of gendered language a consideration of additional categories, the examination of which can provide a richer sense of the social world of humanist scholars. In Trebizond's feuds, the categories each author employed depended on the context of the particular dispute. Trebizond's feud with Guarino was largely defined by the fact that Andreas Agaso used anti-Greek language to denigrate Trebizond as an ignorant, immoral Greek. Agaso attacked Trebizond's learnedness by casting him as a loquacious Greekling rather than an eloquent Latin, and he accused Trebizond of immoral conduct by contrasting Roman *gravitas* with Greek *levitas*. The Trebizond-Poggio feud was defined by the chancery fight and Trebizond's imprisonment for drawing a sword against his opponent. The ensuing dispute was conducted through a language of restraint that contrasted prudence and imprudence, honesty and dishonesty, and reason and emotion. The figures in both feuds also employed gendered categories that included but were not limited to the feminizing antitype that Celenza has identified. They contrasted masculinity with femininity, childishness, and animal or beast-like behavior. These categories offer insight into what scholarly circles deemed appropriate behavior as well as what they considered effective and suited to winning and maintaining honor. My examination thus strives toward the richer, more detailed account of humanist social practices and verbal strategies called for and begun by Celenza.

The present study is also situated in a second historiographical debate, a growing field of works investigating Renaissance invective. Despite its popularity in the fifteenth-century as a vehicle for self-presentation, invective has not received a great deal of

attention by later scholars.²¹ Studies of Quattrocento invective lag far behind more extensive analyses of classical invective.²² Scholars have, however, begun to take notice of the historical value of Renaissance invective. There remain few analyses of humanist invective but the number of editions and translations of these texts has increased since the 1970s. Important recent examples include David Rutherford's edition and translation of Antonio da Rho's invectives and David Marsh's edition and translation of Petrarch's invectives. Both authors include introductions containing brief assessments or overviews of Renaissance invective. Their works are undoubtedly valuable but still offer comparatively little in the way of analysis of the texts themselves. The most significant analytical work done on Renaissance invective is that of Ennio Rao. His *Curmudgeons in High Dudgeon* (2007) contains brief summations of notable humanist conflicts between 1352 and 1453.²³ Rao's work, though, is limited as an analytical study. His survey offers breadth but does not analyze any one conflict in great detail.

To the extent that existing studies have discussed or analyzed invective, they have tended to cast it in a negative light and condemn its authors for their aggressive, harsh

²¹ Davies noted the relative lack of scholarship on Renaissance invective in his very important study of the invectives against Niccolò Niccoli. M.C. Davies, "An Emperor without Clothes? Niccolò Niccoli under Attack," in *Maistor: Classical, Byzantine, and Renaissance Studies for Robert Browning* (Canberra: Australian Association for Byzantine Studies, 1984). Ennio Rao writes that "before the 1950's the invectives [of humanists] were little known and rarely read, as with a few exceptions they were available only in manuscript form or in rare sixteenth-century editions." Rao, 7-10.

²² On classical invective, see especially the studies of C.P. Craig on the standard categories orators used to denigrate their opponents: "Audience Expectations, Invective, and Proof," in *Cicero the Advocate*, ed. J.G.F. Powell and Jeremy Paterson (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 187-213 and Craig, "Self-Restraint, Invective, and Credibility in Cicero's 'First Catilinarian Oration,'" *The American Journal of Philology* 128, no.3 (Autumn, 2007): 335-339. I offer additional examples in Chapter Five.

²³ For an overview of the field of invective studies, see Rao, 7-10. Rao is an important figure. His edition of Bartolomeo Facio's invective against Lorenzo Valla was one of the early editions of humanist invectives. Bartolomeo Facio, *Invective in Laurentium Vallam*, ed. Ennio I. Rao (Naples: Società Editrice Napoletana, 1978). David Rutherford, *Early Renaissance Invective and The Controversies of Antonio da Rho* (Tempe: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies, 2005) and Francesco Petrarca, *Invectives*, ed. and trans. David Marsh (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003).

language. This was true of nineteenth-century writers who found it difficult to reconcile the sometimes savage invectives of humanists with their stated goals, the high-minded pursuit of honor, wisdom, and eloquence, and so criticized polemicists. In his biography of Poggio, William Shepherd lamented that Poggio “unfortunately indulged, to the latest period of his life, that bitterness of resentment, and that intemperance of language” that characterized his professional feuds.²⁴ Even recent studies tend to draw moralizing conclusions from invective, which they treat as a reflection of the author’s character.

Ennio Rao described humanist purveyors of invective as “curmudgeons” in the title of his survey. In his assessment of the Poggio-Valla feud, one of the most explosive and public feuds of the fifteenth-century, he characterized Poggio as “impatient and quick to anger” and as someone who would “at the slightest provocation... unleash his attacks with unprecedented fury.”²⁵

The offensive tone of invective has thus left us with somewhat distorted portraits of individual figures. The tendency toward moralizing views of humanist polemics, then, is an analytical problem in Renaissance studies. Trebizond was engaged in a number of feuds during his career and so modern scholarship has cast him as bitter, morose, and angry. Harold S. Wilson describes him as having “suffered from some very human defects of character,” including being “moved by a vehement impatience for self-advancement,” having a “high sense of his own merits and a somewhat vindictive

²⁴ Shepherd described the invectives between Poggio and Francesco Filelfo in the 1430s as “exhausting every topic of obloquy,” an “odious mass of...allegations,” “virulent and foul abuse,” and as acrimony that “defeated its own purpose.” Shepherd, 252. See also John Addington Symonds, *Renaissance in Italy: The Revival of Learning* (London: Smith, Elder, & Co, 1897), 175. Symonds described the Poggio-Valla conflict as a “disgraceful fray” and Poggio’s orations as “disgusting compositions,” adding that “there is no sort of vituperation which the antagonists do not vomit forth against each other, no obscenity and roguery of which they are not mutually accused.”

²⁵ Rao, *Curmudgeons*, 32, 54-55.

temper” and an “impatient turbulence [which] made him influential enemies.” C. Joachim Classen similarly characterizes Trebizond’s works, including the *RLV*, as suffering “from the author’s arrogance and aggressiveness” and “presumptuousness,” and accuses Trebizond of “hostility toward Italian teachers of rhetoric” and of a “polemical spirit” in his works. Elsewhere, Trebizond has been characterized as “choleric,” “volatile,” as well as arrogant, irritable, and paranoid. John Monfasani, Trebizond’s main biographer, tempers these characterizations somewhat by noting that Trebizond was only rarely the instigator in his conflicts.²⁶

By applying conclusions from recent investigations of humanist anxiety and social practices, such as Celenza’s, we can shift the focus of studies of invective from moralizing conclusions about humanist character to a greater consideration of humanist context. I contend that a more fruitful approach to reading invective is not to ask what it tells us about the conduct or character of the authors but to ask what it tells us about the experiences of the authors. I do not mean to argue that negative portrayals of Trebizond or of invectives such as those exchanged between Poggio-Valla are necessarily incorrect. To reduce our understanding of invective to a question of character assessments alone, though, unnecessarily narrows the value of invectives as historical evidence. Such a focus obscures the social realities that bound and compelled the composition of invective and leads to depictions of scholars as somehow naturally temperamental or irritable. It also obscures the fact that humanists were erudite men well-aware of classical models of invective and capable of applying those models to the needs of contemporary,

²⁶ Harold S. Wilson, “George of Trebizond and Early Humanist Rhetoric,” *Studies in Philology* 40, no.3 (July 1934): 368; C. Joachim Classen, “The Rhetorical Works of George of Trebizond and Their Debt to Cicero,” *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 56 (1993): 80-81 and 84; Thomas M. Conley, *Rhetoric in the European Tradition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), 115; Grendler, 129; James Hankins, *Plato in the Italian Renaissance* (New York: E.J. Brill, 1990), 167; Monfasani, 104.

professional life. I turn back here to Celenza's call to examine humanist social practices. As he writes, "we cannot properly understand these seemingly exaggerated, immensely vitriolic Renaissance polemics...unless we situate the debates...in the social, political context of the acquisition, protection, and maintenance of masculine honor."²⁷ The shift I describe not only allows us to explore additional levels of meaning in invective texts but also to reconsider how we view humanist authors, including Trebizond.

George of Trebizond is a particularly interesting case study to use to bring together studies of anxiety and invective given his place in the existing scholarship. The main source for his career is still John Monfasani's impressive biography, published in 1976. Beyond this, scholars of Renaissance education and rhetoric have recognized the significance of his *RLV*.²⁸ Although his major contributions have been acknowledged, nobody has thoroughly analyzed his correspondence since Monfasani's biography. This is surprising considering that Trebizond spent most of his career in the orbit of significant figures and attained renown and financial success. It is also surprising given the amount of material Monfasani has made available regarding Trebizond's career. Monfasani's *Collectanea Trapezuntiana* not only identifies the extant manuscripts and printed editions of Trebizond's letters and speeches but also provides edited texts for many of them.²⁹ Only a handful of works since Monfasani have studied Trebizond and most of them have been interested in his place in the history of rhetoric.³⁰ The present study of Trebizond's

²⁷ Celenza, *Lost*, 130.

²⁸ See note 2.

²⁹ *Collectanea Trapezuntiana: Texts, Documents, and Bibliographies of George of Trebizond*, ed. John Monfasani (Binghamton, NY: Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies, 1984).

³⁰ Luc Deitz's recent biographical sketch of Trebizond relies on Monfasani. Luc Deitz, introduction to *Rhetoricorum libri quinque*, by George of Trebizond (New York: Georg Olms, 2006). See also Luca

career not only provides entry into a discussion of humanist honor and the verbal strategies of self-presentation but also takes up the investigation of a figure whom scholars—since Monfasani—have examined in a limited manner and whose character has been frequently derided.

Trebizond also offers the opportunity to expand the conversation about humanist anxiety, honor, and social practices in new ways and thus is a useful complement to existing studies of figures such as Lapo. Lapo, as Celenza and others have noted, is an interesting example of an individual perpetually on the outside of lucrative patronage networks looking in.³¹ Trebizond's career can in some ways take us farther than Lapo's. First, Trebizond's feuds take us beyond the confines of the Roman curia of which Lapo struggled so mightily to become a part. The dispute with Poggio began in the curia of course, as both men were serving as apostolic secretaries, but continued despite Trebizond's departure to Naples and Poggio's return to Florence in the spring of 1453. Trebizond's earlier feud with Guarino moreover occurred while Trebizond was in Venice. Second, Trebizond's disputes allow us to explore social practices and verbal strategies at two distinctly different points in a humanist's career and under very different circumstances. While Lapo failed to achieve success in the curia and ultimately died young, Trebizond both achieved financial success and renown and lived a much longer life. His experiences were more varied and thus so were his verbal strategies. The contest with Guarino in 1437 occurred relatively early in Trebizond's career. To build a reputation for himself, Trebizond had in his *RLV* criticized respected rhetorical

D'Ascia, "La Retorica di Giorgio da Trebisonda e L'umaneismo Ciceroniano," *Rinascimento* 29 (1989): 193-216; Classen, 75-84; Lucia Calboli Montefusco, "Ciceronian and Hermogenean Influences on George of Trebizond's *Rhetoricorum Libri V*," *Rhetorica* 26, no.2 (2008): 139-164.

³¹ See pages 10-11.

authorities, Guarino included.³² The feud with Poggio was not about gaining honor but about mitigating damage done to his reputation. At that point, Trebizond was no longer an aspiring humanist but a successful one and his changing circumstances are certainly reflected in the correspondence of the dispute. With Trebizond, then, we can examine not just the strategies of an aspiring scholar but also of one who had won, lost, and was trying to regain honor.

Sources

The source material for the present investigation is, first of all, the correspondence and invectives written during the Trebizond-Guarino and Trebizond-Poggio feuds. The sources for Trebizond's feud with Guarino consist of three main pieces composed in March 1437. These compositions include the letter from Andreas Agaso to Paulus Regius, Trebizond's response to the Agaso letter addressed to Guarino, and the cover letter Trebizond attached to his response and addressed to Leonello d'Este.³³ My analysis of the Trebizond-Guarino feud relies on critical editions of the letters of Agaso and Trebizond in Monfasani's *Collectanea Trapezuntiana*. The *Collectanea* also includes a list and discussion of the extant manuscripts that provides a sense of how they were transmitted. Monfasani reports that Agaso's letter appears alongside Trebizond's response in all but two of the manuscripts. It is notable that the correspondence of the dispute was preserved together given the importance that Renaissance figures ascribed to

³² The *RLV* was the culmination of Trebizond's early works in Italy. In the early 1420s he composed for Vittorino da Feltre a synopsis of the ideas of Hermogenes of Tarsus, a Greek rhetorician of the second century. In 1426, he composed a second piece on Hermogenes titled *De suavitate dicendi* and dedicated to Girolamo Bragadin. Trebizond also delivered public speeches in 1421 in Vicenza and in the early 1430s in Venice to demonstrate his eloquence. Monfasani rightly views each of these early works as Trebizond's attempts to elevate his status. He notes that Trebizond ended his speech in Venice by promising to teach rhetoric publicly on feast days. Monfasani, 17-21 and 26

³³ See the outlines of Trebizond's feuds with Guarino and Poggio, pages 4-6.

collecting and circulating personal letters.³⁴ Indeed, the Trebizond-Guarino affair was a public one. In the fall of 1437, approximately five months after Trebizond wrote his response to Guarino, Poggio Bracciolini wrote a letter to Christopher Cauchus thanking his friend for sending to him the Agaso letter and Trebizond's response.³⁵ Poggio's letter attests to the public nature of the Trebizond-Guarino dispute, the manner in which the texts of the feud circulated—hand to hand from friend to friend—and the speed by which the texts were transmitted.

The correspondence of the Trebizond-Poggio dispute consists of five main pieces written between 1453 and 1454. These include Trebizond's letters to Poggio and Nicholas V in January 1453, Poggio's response to Trebizond in February, Trebizond's reply to Poggio in March, and a letter from Trebizond to his son Andreas in June 1454. Each of these pieces fundamentally dealt with the chancery fight of May 1452. Ernst Walser's *Poggius Florentinus* contains Trebizond's January letters to Poggio and to Nicholas as well as Trebizond's March reply to Poggio, though the letters have not been edited. Poggio's February response to Trebizond, also unedited, is in Thomas Tonelli's collection of Poggio's correspondence. Monfasani provides Trebizond's 1454 letter to Andreas, based on the sole Renaissance copy, in his *Collectanea*.³⁶

³⁴ *Collectanea*, 360-411. Monfasani lists eight manuscripts for the Agaso letter and five for Trebizond's response, including the cover letter to Leonello. The *Collectanea* includes an edited version, based on the oldest dated manuscript, of Trebizond's initial criticism of Guarino in the *RLV*.

³⁵ The unedited letter is in *Poggii Epistolae*, ed. T. Tonelli, 3 vols. (Florence, 1832-1861), 2:125-128. Tonelli's edition is reprinted in Poggio, *Opera Omnia*, vol. 3, *Epistolae* (Turin: 1964). Poggio's letter is dated September 1437.

³⁶ For Trebizond's letters to Poggio and Nicholas V in January and March 1453, see Ernst Walser, *Poggius Florentinus: Leben und Werke* (Leipzig: Teubner, 1914), 501-514. Poggio's letter from February 1453 is in *Poggii Epistolae*, ed. Tonelli, 3:49-52. Trebizond's June 1454 letter to Andreas is in *Collectanea*, 117-124.

In addition to these sources, I also explore two additional invectives, the first written by Guarino against Niccolò Niccoli in 1413, and the second written by Poggio against Lorenzo Valla in 1452. These sources not only demonstrate how Trebizond's opponents expressed the same kind of anxiety regarding audience and reputation as he did, but also show how they relied on the same verbal strategies to contest honor. Guarino composed his invective against Niccoli, originally written as a letter to Guarino's friend Biagio Guasconi, in response to the alleged abuse he had suffered from Niccoli while working with the man in Florence. He later revised his letter for a wider circulation and titled it *Against the Fake Poet* [*In auripellem poetam*]. Guarino's invective is in Remigio Sabbadini's collection of Guarino's letters.³⁷ Poggio wrote four invectives against Valla during their dispute between 1452 and 1453 in response to what he claimed to be Valla's attacks on his writing style. I analyze the first of these, available in Poggio's *Opera* and edited by Tonelli.³⁸

Chapter Outline

The present study is divided into four main chapters, each of which explores from a different perspective how scholars used language to present themselves to humanist readers, aggrandizing themselves while denigrating others, all in the pursuit of honor and esteem in the humanist community. The first three chapters are devoted to analyses of the specific concepts, language, and themes that framed Trebizond's feuds with Guarino and Poggio. Chapter Two addresses anti-Greek slander and cultural stereotypes during the

³⁷ Remigio Sabbadini discusses the feud in *Vita di Guarino Veronese* (Genoa: Instituto Sordo-Mutti, 1891), 19-21. Martin Davies examines Guarino's invective in his article on Niccoli's feuds, note 21. For Guarino's invective, see *Epistolario di Guarino Veronese*, ed. Remigio Sabbadini, vol. 1, *Testo* (Venezia: A spese della società, 1915), 33-46

³⁸ Poggio Bracciolini, *Opera Omnia*, ed. T. Tonelli, 4 vols. (Basel, 1538; rpt. Turin, 1964-1969), 1:188-205.

Trebizond-Guarino dispute and the challenges facing Greek émigrés in the West during the early fifteenth century. Agaso composed a letter in 1437 notable for its frequent use of anti-Greek language which he used to criticize Trebizond's knowledge of the Latin language and moral conduct. The chapter contends that Agaso's anti-Greek slander was a conscious verbal strategy based on classical and early modern Greek stereotypes and intended to cast Trebizond as an incompetent, immoral Greekling. Trebizond believed Guarino himself to have penned the Agaso letter and responded to him directly in a letter of his own. He refuted "Agaso's" anti-Greek language but engaged with Guarino using the same oppositional categories—including eloquence and loquaciousness as well as *gravitas* and *levitas*—contained in the Agaso letter. Trebizond used these categories as Agaso had, to praise himself and vilify his opponent, Guarino.

Chapter Three is an analysis of the interrelated humanist concepts of reason and restraint in the aftermath of Trebizond's fist fight with Poggio in the papal chancery in May 1452. Chapter Three argues that Trebizond's correspondence from Naples reflects a consistent effort to reframe the events in the chancery and present himself as having acted reasonably and with restraint. A language of restraint was therefore the foundation of Trebizond's dispute with Poggio and of his attempts to mitigate the damage done to his reputation. As with his earlier feud with Guarino, both Trebizond and Poggio employed similar verbal strategies and categories to defend themselves and defame their opponent. Trebizond and Poggio conducted their dispute by means of oppositional categories including reason and emotion, prudence and imprudence, and honesty and dishonesty. Both men demonstrated a concern for their reputations and how others viewed their

actions, and both men strove to influence how their peers would view the chancery fight and their relationship after that event.

Chapter Four considers both the Trebizond-Guarino and Trebizond-Poggio feuds as evidence for the humanist use of concepts of masculinity in acts of self-presentation. The chapter argues that the humanist understanding of manhood, derived from classical and medieval antecedents, considered reason as the identifying quality of manhood and that humanists used gendered language to verbally emasculate their opponents in the public eye. Gendered language was prominent in the insults exchanged during both feuds and was used to advance characterizations of oneself as learned, knowledgeable, prudent, honest, and restrained, as well as to denigrate one's opponent as unlearned, lacking eloquence, imprudent, dishonest, and emotional. The analysis of Chapter Four, like that of Chapter Two, is organized around the two main avenues of attack employed by the figures involved: insults involving either an opponent's knowledge or his moral conduct. Whether attacking an opponent's learning or conduct, humanists used categories related to gender to give shape and substance to their invective and contrasted concepts of manhood with concepts of the child, woman, and beast.

The fifth and final chapter steps back from a deep thematic analysis of Trebizond's feuds to consider the vehicle for humanist self-presentation: invective. The focus shifts to two additional feuds, Guarino's dispute with Niccolò Niccoli in 1413 and Poggio's conflict with Valla between 1452 and 1453, adding analytical breadth to the depth of the preceding chapters. In expanding beyond Trebizond's feuds, the final chapter contextualizes Trebizond's experiences—his anxiety about public perception and

reputation, his pursuit of honor, the strategies he used to achieve his goals and challenge his adversaries—in the broader community of humanist scholars. Chapter Five argues that invective was one of the primary modes of expression available to humanists for the rhetorical presentation of self. Humanists understood invective to have discernible guidelines and limitations, a sense of which they derived from the classical Latin oratorical tradition and adapted to contemporary contests of honor. The chapter examines some of the staples of invective—the concept of provocation, the standard sets of tropes and issues humanists drew upon, and the use of wit and humor—that characterized the genre. The chapter demonstrates that our understanding of invective and its authors is best situated in a consideration of the socio-economic and professional stressors and anxiety about reputation that defined humanist life in the Quattrocento.

CHAPTER TWO
ANTI-GREEK LANGUAGE
AND THE DISPUTE BETWEEN
GEORGE OF TREBIZOND AND GUARINO OF VERONA

Introduction

The dispute between George of Trebizond and Guarino of Verona was a product of the publication of Trebizond's *Rhetoricorum libri quinque* (*RLV*), the first Renaissance treatise on rhetoric, in 1434. In the preface, he lamented what he described as a severe decline in the study of rhetoric and took aim at a host of medieval rhetorical authorities as well as those who continued to teach them. His argument was not new. He had argued much the same in a speech in Venice shortly before the publication of the *RLV*. In the fifth book of his treatise, he offered explicit criticism of one current instructor when he analyzed an encomium in praise of the condottiere Carmagnola. Guarino of Verona, one of the foremost humanist schoolmen of the fifteenth century and one of Trebizond's own former Latin instructors, composed the encomium. Trebizond's challenges to medieval and Renaissance authorities, including Guarino, were very public attempts to better his reputation as a rhetorical authority. In fact, he sent a copy of the *RLV* to Guarino himself. In 1437, he came into possession of a letter circulating under the name Andreas Agaso and addressed to Paulus Regius. Both men were supposedly students of Guarino. The Agaso letter contained a stalwart defense of Guarino and a scathing criticism of the *RLV*, especially Trebizond's rhetorical knowledge and style. Trebizond responded within days

with a letter addressed to Leonello d'Este, son of the Ferraran ruler and Guarino's student, which blamed Guarino for adopting the Agaso pseudonym and attacking him.¹

One of the most prominent features of the Agaso letter is the extent to which the author expresses his arguments through anti-Greek language. Agaso criticizes Trebizond's knowledge of the Latin language and casts aspersions on his moral character by employing an array of negative cultural stereotypes with roots in classical Roman as well as contemporary thought. This chapter contends that Agaso's anti-Greek language was a deliberate verbal strategy crafted to contest honor and reputation. His attacks on Trebizond as a Greek were attempts to undermine his authority as a rhetorician and defend Guarino's honor in a public manner by writing a letter he intended to be seen by others.² These anti-Greek attacks were intended to define Trebizond as an incompetent and immoral Greekling rather than as a skilled Latinist and reliable rhetorical authority. Cultural stereotypes were so central to Agaso's arguments that Trebizond was forced to respond to them in his own letter to Guarino. Trebizond countered with his own acts of self-presentation, defending both his Latinity—his skill and eloquence as a Latinist—and his moral rectitude. He was as intent as Agaso in making his acts of self-presentation a public matter, an intention perhaps nowhere more evident than in his cover letter to Leonello d'Este, where Trebizond called upon the Ferraran patron to arrange a public

¹ For the sources for the dispute see *Collectanea Trapezuntiana: Texts, Documents, and Bibliographies of George of Trebizond*, ed. John Monfasani (Binghamton, NY: Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies, 1984), 360-411. For Trebizond's initial criticisms of Guarino in the *RLV*, see *ibid.*, 360-364. For the letter of Andreas Agaso to Paulus Regius, see *ibid.*, 364-376. For Trebizond's cover letter to Leonello d'Este and the *Responsio* to Guarino, see *ibid.*, 377-411.

² The correspondence of the Trebizond-Guarino dispute was intended for and read by a public audience beyond the recipients of the original letters. Monfasani notes that in all but two of the manuscripts of Agaso's letter, it accompanies Trebizond's *Responsio*. The texts, after leaving their authors's hands, were copied, circulated, and read together. Trebizond's interest in public opinion is evident in the revisions he made both to Agaso's letter and to his own *Responsio*. He was clearly interested in how the feud was viewed by others. For a discussion of the existing manuscripts, see *ibid.*, 364 and 377.

oratorical exhibition between Guarino and himself to prove once and for all who was the more eloquent man.³ The Agaso letter and Trebizond's *Responsio* to Guarino represented competing attempts to sway public perception and persuade an audience composed of fellow scholars and potential patrons.

An analysis of the anti-Greek language in this correspondence advances our understanding of fifteenth-century humanism and the experience of Greek émigrés in Italy. Such an analysis illustrates for instance the need for a reconsideration of the traditional narrative of the experience of Greek scholars during the Renaissance. This narrative focuses on how the west embraced Greeks and Greek learning in the first half of the fifteenth century. It explains how the arrival of Manuel Chrysoloras (1355-1415) in Florence in 1397 inspired Italians to an interest in Greek studies and sparked a wave of philhellenism. John Monfasani describes how it was Chrysoloras's pupils who "almost immediately inaugurated the Renaissance absorption of the Byzantine rhetorical tradition."⁴ Some of these men, most notably Francesco Filelfo and Guarino himself, travelled to Constantinople for additional training.⁵ This interest in Greek studies expanded to include powerful Italian patrons, including the papacy. Fifteenth-century Rome became a hub for Greek cultural activity, where émigrés such as Cardinal

³ Ibid., 379 (9). ...si multis etatibus omisum pravitate morum et ignorantia declamandi usum, ut debes, revocare cupis, me tibi dedo. Paratus adero quandocumque iusseris. Hortare Guarinum ad hoc tam preclarum munus subeundum, quod apud maiores tanti fuit ut etiam seniores iam et defuncti non nunquam honoribus oratores domi ad excitandum ingenium declamarent.

⁴ John Monfasani, "The Byzantine Rhetorical Tradition and the Renaissance," in *Byzantine Scholars in Renaissance Italy: Cardinal Bessarion and Other Émigrés* (Brookfield, Vt: Variorum, 1995), 177-178. Chysoloras's students included Guarino, Leonardo Bruni, Pier Paolo Vergerio, Palla Strozzi, and Roberto Rossi.

⁵ This narrative can be traced back to Kenneth Setton's important article, "The Byzantine Background to the Italian Renaissance," *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 100 (1956): 1-76. For a succinct example of the narrative, see L.D. Reynolds and N.G. Wilson, *Scribes and Scholars: A Guide to the Transmission of Greek and Latin Literature* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 146-154.

Bessarion facilitated the copying, translation, and transmission of Greek texts in Italy. A substantial strain of existing scholarship focuses on identifying Greek scholars in Italy and tracking their contributions to Italian humanism in an era actively cultivating antiquarian interests. Deno Geanakoplos's work on Byzantine scholars is representative of this approach, as is John Monfasani's, including his major biography of Trebizond.⁶

Studies of Byzantine contributions have been invaluable in their own right, but scholars have recently begun to look at some of the problems Greeks faced in Italy as well. The result has been a growing realization that Byzantine experiences were more complex than the traditional narrative suggests. Monfasani's recent works are an excellent example of this scholarly turn. He warns that merely listing the achievements of émigré Greeks misleads us into believing that Byzantines "started" the Renaissance. He does not deny the formative influence of Byzantines but notes that "despite all the glamour that attaches to them today and despite the clear success some of them enjoyed," many struggled in Italy.⁷ Others have noted these struggles as well and offered qualifications or changes to the traditional narrative. James Hankins, in his work on Renaissance crusading literature, suggests that Italian philhellenism was largely restricted to intellectuals and elites and that the west received Greeks less favorably than humanist

⁶ John Monfasani, *George of Trebizond: A Biography and a Study of his Rhetoric and Logic* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1976) and *Byzantine Scholars in Renaissance Italy*. For Deno Geanakoplos, see his *Greek Scholars in Venice: Studies in the Dissemination of Greek Learning from Byzantium to Western Europe* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1962); *Byzantine East and Latin West: Two Worlds of Christendom in the Middle Ages and Renaissance* (New York: Harper & Row, 1966); *Interaction of the "Sibling" Byzantine and Western Cultures in the Middle Ages and Italian Renaissance (330-1600)* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1976).

⁷ John Monfasani, "Greek Renaissance Migrations," *Italian History and Culture* 8 (2002): 5-7 and "The Pro-Latin Apologetics of the Greek Émigrés to Quattrocento Italy," in *Byzantine Theology and its Philosophical Background*, ed. Antonio Rigo (Turnhout: Brepolis, 2011), 160.

accounts indicate.⁸ Jonathan Harris has also spoken about biases against Greeks in the west but does not address how these biases functioned among intellectuals.⁹ Some scholars have discussed the increasing troubles that Greeks faced particularly in the second half of the fifteenth century, as the number of Greek teachers increased and as Latins became increasingly capable of teaching the language independent of Greeks.¹⁰ Monfasani's description of the "Latin chauvinism" of Angelo Poliziano is an example of this, though he does not explore the implications of anti-Greek bias in detail.¹¹

Though scholars have begun to address the problems with the traditional narrative, neither anti-Greek language nor the impact of Greek biases on fifteenth-century humanism have received sufficient attention. The Trebizond-Guarino correspondence demonstrates how anti-Greek attacks functioned prominently in contests of honor and illustrates how Greek biases were evident even among Renaissance intellectuals at the height of the philhellenic movement in the early fifteenth century. Even as scholars were genuinely excited about a resurgence in Greek learning, Greeks faced barriers to cultivating their reputation that their Italian counterparts did not. An Italy becoming open to the study of Greek letters and an Italy with a pro-Latin bias were not mutually

⁸ James Hankins, "Renaissance Crusaders: Humanist Crusade Literature in the Age of Mehmed II," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 49 (1995): 111-207; George Arabatzis, "Sailing Away from Byzantium: Renaissance Crusade Literature and Peace Plans," in *War and Peace: Critical Issues in European Societies and Literature 800-1800*, ed. Albrecht Classen and Nadia Margolis (Boston, MA: De Gruyter, 2011), 463-490.

⁹ Jonathan Harris, *Greek Émigrés in the West: 1400-1520* (Camberley: Porphyrogenitus, 1995), 39-41, 62-68.

¹⁰ Paul Botley, *Learning Greek in Western Europe, 1396-1529: Grammars, Lexica, and Classroom Texts* (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 2010), 115-116; Federica Ciccolella, *Donati Graeci: Learning Greek in the Renaissance* (Boston: Brill, 2008), 121; Monfasani, "Migrations," 11.

¹¹ John Monfasani, "Angelo Poliziano, Aldo Manuzio, Theodore Gaza, George of Trebizond, and Chapter 90 of the *Miscellaneorum Centuria Prima* (with an Edition and Translation)," in *Interpretations of Renaissance Humanism*, ed. Angelo Mazzocco (Boston: Brill, 2006), 243-265.

exclusive. The Agaso letter speaks to a pro-Latin bias in the culture of fifteenth-century humanism. In challenging Trebizond's Latinity, Agaso articulated a standard of intellectual excellence rooted in the Latin language, not Greek. Agaso also employed negative cultural stereotypes depicting Greeks as dishonest, treacherous, arrogant, heretical, and devoid of honor. These stereotypes had roots in classical Roman thought as well as in the history of crusading, attempts to unify the Greek and Roman churches, and the tension between Latins and Greeks that developed over time because of these issues. They also forced Trebizond to craft a presentation of himself that could counter Agaso's claims. His response illustrates the pressure he felt as a member of a minority to prove his Latinity, defend his Greek heritage, and defend the value of Greek learning more broadly.

An analysis of anti-Greek language also allows us to understand better Trebizond's career. In his biography, Monfasani rightly argues that even as he struggled to assimilate to life in Italy, Trebizond remained a Greek patriot.¹² Monfasani emphasized Trebizond's complex attitudes toward his homeland, and with good reason. Trebizond frequently appears torn between his Latin and Greek identities in his response to Guarino. Their correspondence allows us to advance Monfasani's analysis by understanding why a balance between Latin assimilation and Greek patriotism had to be struck. Agaso's vehement criticism of Trebizond's Latinity makes clear how essential proficiency in Latin was to a humanist's reputation and identity. At the same time, Trebizond's Greek background afforded him opportunities among Italians interested in the resurgence of Greek. It is notable that in defending the value of Greek to Guarino, he makes the same arguments that fifteenth-century Italian philhellenes employed. To the typical stresses associated with contesting honor and building a reputation, he had the

¹² Monfasani, *George of Trebizond*, 128-130 and 139.

added pressure of demonstrating the appropriate balance between his Greek background and his Latinity. He could not afford to be cast as an incompetent Greekling but neither could he simply accept wholesale the premise that Greeks were unlearned. The result is that Trebizond is at times inconsistent, wavering between depictions of himself as a Latinist so skilled he could be mistaken for a contemporary of Cicero, and as an ardent defender of the Greek language struggling to help it attain a place of prominence on par with Latin.

The Trebizond-Guarino correspondence also raises questions about Guarino himself, although any conclusions here must be tentative. The authorship of the Agaso letter is by no means clear.¹³ Trebizond argued that nobody had ever heard of an “Andreas Agaso,” and maintained even decades later that Guarino had written the letter. Monfasani adds that nobody since then has managed to find Agaso, and that he, like Trebizond, believes Guarino was the author.¹⁴ At least one other Greek émigré, Andronicus Contoblacas, suggested, in the middle of his own feud with the man years later, that Guarino had written as Agaso.¹⁵ The evidence to the contrary rests on the

¹³ The question of Agaso’s existence complicates a discussion of the texts of the Trebizond-Guarino dispute. When discussing the Agaso letter, I refer to the author as “Andreas Agaso” rather than Guarino because the authorship of that letter and Agaso’s very existence are in question. When discussing Trebizond’s response to the Agaso letter, I typically follow Trebizond and refer to “Agaso” as Guarino. Trebizond does occasionally discuss Agaso and Guarino separately, usually when trying to prove the two were the same person, and in those cases I make the distinction as well. When I say that Trebizond replies to Guarino, this indicates his response to something in the Agaso letter that he believes Guarino to have written while posing as Agaso. Monfasani adds that there is no evidence Paulus Regius was a real person either. Monfasani, *George of Trebizond*, 30-32.

¹⁴ *Collectanea*, 381. (2) Nam ut latere possis, ne tibi respondeam, vel inter asinos ita te intrusisti ut Agaso factus sis et posteris hoc te nomine tuis scriptis commendes. Quid enim celare nomen tuum, et Agasonem nescio quem, non te in Georgium invehi credituros homines putasti? At primum, nullum in Italia qui litteraturam profiteatur hoc nomine appellari constat; nec sane invenies aliquem preter te qui se ita velit vocitari.

¹⁵ John Monfasani, “In Praise of Ognibene and Blame of Guarino: Andronicus Contoblacas’ Invective against Niccolò Botano and the Citizens of Brescia,” *Bibliothèque d’Humanisme et Renaissance* 52 (1990): 309-321.

testimony of Poggio Bracciolini. Poggio argued in September 1437 that the letter was not written in Guarino's style and that Guarino would have defended himself openly rather than hiding behind a pseudonym or one of his students.¹⁶ Poggio's testimony was a point of contention in his later feud with Trebizond but there was no evident animosity between the two at this earlier date. There is no reason to doubt Poggio's sincerity regarding the Agaso letter.

Although there is ultimately no incontrovertible evidence identifying Agaso as Guarino, the Agaso letter complicates the image of Guarino as a devoted philhellene. Guarino's philhellenic reputation is truly difficult to overstate, as is his role in the spread of Greek learning. Chrysoloras, his Greek instructor, gave a major impetus to this movement but wrote little. By 1417, Guarino had produced an abridged version of Chrysoloras's most notable piece, a manual on Greek inflections, which became one of the standard Greek grammars of the fifteenth century.¹⁷ If Guarino wrote the Agaso letter, it serves as evidence that even one of the most renowned and ardent philhellenes of the early fifteenth century employed anti-Greek language to undermine the credibility of a Byzantine rival. Whether Guarino truly believed the stereotypes is a separate question. He and Trebizond were both engaging in a process of self-fashioning that required them to use a variety of rhetorical strategies to define themselves and each other. The Agaso attacks may simply have been attempts to use stereotypes to appeal to existing pro-Latin, anti-Greek biases. Even so, this interpretation is difficult to square with an image of Guarino as the devoted student of Chrysoloras, as a man who ventured to Constantinople,

¹⁶ *Poggii Epistolae*, ed. T. Tonelli, vol. 2 (Florence, 1832-1861): 125-128. Tonelli's edition is reprinted in Poggio Bracciolini, *Opera Omnia*, vol. 3, *Epistolae* (Turin: 1964).

¹⁷ Paul Grendler, *Schooling in Renaissance Italy: Literacy and Learning, 1300-1600* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989), 265; Botley, 2 and 7-12; Ciccolella, 101 and 130-131.

and one who wrote extensively about the importance of Greek literature. If Guarino wrote the letter, his anti-Greek attacks indicate limits to the acceptance of Byzantines in Italy, even among those who supported the spread of Greek studies. If there really was an Andreas Agaso, the question becomes why Guarino remained silent when Trebizond wrote against him. He could simply have rejected his student's attacks against Trebizond's Greekness. That he did not may indicate complicity. It could however equally well indicate Guarino's unwillingness to engage in a dispute with someone he considered beneath him. For my part, I follow Monfasani in believing that Guarino wrote the letter, and find compelling the question he raises: Why did Andreas Agaso not step forward and prove Trebizond wrong about Guarino?¹⁸ Moreover, I tend also to agree with Trebizond's assessment—and disagree with Poggio's—that the Agaso letter bears Guarino's hallmarks, a point to which I will return throughout this chapter. Regardless of the question of authorship, at the very least, the extensive use of anti-Greek language in the Agaso letter indicates that Greek émigrés faced challenges even among intellectuals.

The structure of this chapter is derived from the two main types of attacks in the Agaso letter, one against Trebizond's knowledge of Latin and the other against his moral character. In both cases, Agaso explains Trebizond's flaws as a function of his Greekness. The first argument relies on ancient Roman stereotypes of the Greek as *ineptus* and *loquax* to characterize Trebizond as ignorant of the Latin language and incapable of understanding the art of speaking, much less of teaching it to others. These characterizations are primarily framed as challenges to Trebizond's Latinity and are the subject of the first part of the present analysis. The second argument and the second part of the present analysis consist of Agaso's challenges to Trebizond's moral conduct.

¹⁸ Monfasani, *George of Trebizond*, 30-31.

Agaso relies on the classical Roman distinction between Roman *gravitas* and Greek *levitas* to cast Trebizond as audacious, arrogant, ungrateful, and shameless. The two arguments—against knowledge and moral conduct—are not mutually exclusive, as when Agaso argues that Trebizond’s faulty teachings and attacks on learned authorities are signs of both his ignorance and arrogance. I divide my treatment of these two kinds of arguments for the sake of clarity, but point to areas where they overlap as well. At its heart, I offer an analysis of concepts of Greekness and how they serve as the foundation for anti-Greek attacks in this contest of honor. Given the debt Agaso and Trebizond owe to the classical Roman discussion of Greeks, I begin with a discussion of the models from which they drew.

The Classical Roman Precedent

In casting Trebizond as an ignorant and immoral Greekling, Agaso was taking part in a very old conversation about the differences between Latins and Greeks, one in which a number of Roman authors of the late Republic and empire engaged.¹⁹ Many of Agaso’s more explicit anti-Greek attacks rely on Cicero.²⁰ His works are a useful lens through which to understand the classical Roman conception of Greekness, which could at times be decidedly negative. The *De oratore*, for instance, describes Greeks as *ineptus* and *loquax*. The former suggests a lack of tact or impertinence while the latter indicates a

¹⁹ A number of studies examine classical Roman views of Greeks. For a recent account see Benjamin Isaac, *The Invention of Racism in Classical Antiquity* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004), 381-405. See also Nicholas Petrochilos, *Roman Attitudes to the Greeks* (Athens: National and Capodistrian University of Athens, 1974), 35-53; Arnaldo Momigliano, *Alien Wisdom: The Limits of Hellenization* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1975); J.P.V.D. Balsdon, *Romans and Aliens* (Chapel Hill: University of Carolina Press, 1979); Erich S. Gruen, *Culture and National Identity in Republican Rome* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1992); Antony Spawforth, *Greece and the Augustan Cultural Revolution* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

²⁰ Cicero’s opinion of Greeks is by no means easy to identify and how he speaks of them depends largely on his purpose in writing. See Isaac, 390-393.

concern with argumentation rather than truth, with loquaciousness, not eloquence.²¹

Cicero has Crassus describe the Greeks thus in discussing Plato's *Gorgias*, noting, "in fact controversy about a word has long tormented those Greeklings, fonder as they are of argument than of truth."²² He maintains this position when Sulpicius asks him whether there is an art of oratory: "Do you think I am some idle talkative [*loquax*] Greekling that you propound to me a petty question on which to talk as I will?" Mucius replies by contrasting loquaciousness with eloquence: "It is for you, Crassus, to comply with the wishes of young men, who do not want the everyday chatter [*loquacitas*] of some unpracticed Greek...but something from the wisest and most eloquent man in the world."²³ In the second book of the dialogue, Catulus describes the *ineptus* man as someone who "fails to realize the demands of the occasion, or talks too much, or advertises himself, or ignores the prestige or convenience of those with whom he has to deal, or, in short, is in any way awkward or tedious." He then relates this to the entire "Greek nation," which

with all its learning, abounds in this fault...but, of all the countless forms assumed by want of tact, I rather think that the grossest is the Greeks' habit, in any place

²¹ Petrochilos, 37-39.

²² This and subsequent translations are Sutton's. Cicero, *De oratore*, trans. E.W. Sutton (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1959), 1.47-48. quo in libro in hoc maxime admirabar Platonem, quod mihi in oratoribus irridendis ipse esse orator summus videbatur. Verbi enim controversia iamdiu torquet Graeculos homines, contentionis cupidiores quam veritatis.

L. Licinius Crassus (b. 140 B.C.) was a prominent Roman orator and the spokesperson for Cicero's views throughout the dialogue. See H. Rackham, introduction to Cicero, *De oratore*, trans. E.W. Sutton, xiii.

²³ Cic., *De or.* 1.102. Quid? mihi nunc vos, inquit Crassus, tanquam alicui Graeculo otioso et loquaci, et fortasse docto atque erudito, quaestiunculam, de qua meo arbitratu loquar, ponitis?; Cic., *De or.* 1.105. Gerendus est tibi mos adolescentibus, Crasse: qui non Graeci alicuius quotidianam loquacitatem sine usu, neque ex scholis cantilenam requirunt, sed ex homine omnium sapientissimo atque eloquentissimo, atque ex eo, qui non in libellis, sed in maximis causis, et in hoc domicilio imperii et gloriae, sit consilio linguaque princeps; cuius vestigia persequi cupiunt, eius sententiam sciscitantur.

and any company they like, of plunging into the most subtle dialectic concerning subjects that present extreme difficulty, or at any rate do not call for discussion.²⁴

Whatever Cicero's own opinion on the matter, his dialogue suggests that for at least some Romans, Greek learning was characterized by a combination of loquaciousness—certainly not eloquence—and *ineptia*.

Loquacitas and *ineptia* also served as signs of Greek arrogance in Cicero's works. Some argued that by claiming to know more than they do and by speaking endlessly about all issues, Greeks overreached themselves. In *De oratore*, Catulus articulates the connection between loquaciousness and arrogance when he asks: "What can be more arrogant [*arrogans*], more loquacious [*loquax*]...than for a Greek, who has never seen a foeman or a camp...to lecture on military matters to Hannibal?"²⁵ In his defense of Flaccus, Cicero takes aim at the alleged *levitas* of the Greek witnesses and accusers.²⁶ He refers to them as impudent, unlettered, and *leves*, and speaks about the *levitas* and *crudelitas* of the Greeks as a people.²⁷ Cicero makes clear their lack of

²⁴ Cic., *De or.* 2.17-18. Quem enim nos 'ineptum' vocamus, is mihi videtur ab hoc nomen habere ductum, quod non sit aptus; idque in sermonis nostri consuetudine perlate patet; nam qui aut, tempus quid postulet, non videt, aut plura loquitur, aut se ostentat, aut eorum, quibuscum est, vel dignitatis, vel commodi rationem non habet, aut denique in aliquo genere aut inconcinnus, aut multus est, is ineptus dicitur. Hoc vitio cumulata est eruditissima illa Graecorum natio...Omnium autem ineptiarum, quae sunt innumerabiles, haud scio, an nulla sit maior, quam, ut illi solent, quocumque in loco, quoscumque inter homines visum est, de rebus aut difficillimis, aut non necessariis, argutissime disputare.

²⁵ Sutton translates this sentence as "what better example of prating insolence could there be than for a Greek... ." My alternative translation draws attention to the descriptive terms used. Cic., *De or.* 2.76. quid enim aut arrogantius, aut loquacius fieri potuit, quam Hannibali, qui tot annis de imperio cum populo Romano, omnium gentium victore, certasset, Graecum hominem, qui nunquam hostem, nunquam castra vidisset, nunquam denique minimam partem ullius publici muneris attigisset, praecepta de re militari dare?

²⁶ For a discussion of Greek *levitas* see Isaac, 393 and Petrochilos, 40-42.

²⁷ This and subsequent translations are Lord's. Cicero, *Pro Flacco*, in *The Speeches of Cicero*, trans. Louis E. Lord (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1937). Cic., *Flac.* 9-11. Sed sunt in illo numero multi boni, docti, pudentes, qui ad hoc iudicium deducti non sunt, multi impudentes, illiterati, leves, quos variis de causis video concitatos; Cic., *Flac.* 24. Si quem infimo loco natum, nullo splendore vitae, nulla commendatione famae defenderem, tamen civem a civibus communis humanitatis iure ac misericordia deprecari, ne ignotis testibus, ne incitatis, ne accusatoris consessoribus, convivis, contubernalibus, ne

gravitas, thus establishing a contrast between *levitas* and *gravitas* and linking both to honor.²⁸ In this context, *levitas* indicates actions or individuals lacking dignity. It readily encompasses concepts such as arrogance, selfishness, shamelessness, or presumptuousness.²⁹ Cicero offers Heraclides, whom he describes as utterly without honor, as a specific example of Greek *levitas*. He borrowed money on the endorsement of a good and honest man, Hermippus, secretly left Rome “after cheating many persons out of small loans,” later lied and claimed he had repaid the money, and then lied again about the loan at trial, where he “heaped all sorts of insults and curses on Hermippus.”³⁰ Not only does Cicero portray Heraclides as a selfish liar and characterize him as *audax* and *loquax*, he contrasts him with Hermippus, a *pudens* and *optimus vir*. Cicero’s application of the concept of *levitas* suggests that the *levis Graecus homo* was as much a classical stereotype as the *ineptus* or *loquax Graecus homo*.

Despite the negative depiction of Greeks in the passages above, Cicero’s treatment of Greeks was by no means wholly negative. This is even the case in the *Pro Flacco*. The severity of Cicero’s treatment of Greek morality in that speech is largely a function of the Greek witnesses and accusers at the trial. This becomes clear when Cicero describes himself as “not unsympathetic to that race” and notes that there are among the Greeks “many honorable [*bonus*], learned [*doctus*], [and] modest [*pudens*] men.” Cicero

hominibus levitate Graecis, crudelitate barbaris civem ac supplicem vestrum dederetis, ne periculosam imitationem exempli reliquis in posterum proderetis; Cic., *Flac.* 61. liceat mihi potius de levitate Graecorum queri quam de crudelitate...

²⁸ Cic., *Flac.* 36. Das enim mihi quod haec causa maxime postulat, nullam gravitatem, nullam constantiam, nullum firmum in Graecis hominibus consilium, nullam denique esse testimonii fidem.

²⁹ I follow Isaac: “in Cicero’s time and in his work, [*levitas* was] used for *viles* or people considered *nullo honore dignos*.” Isaac, 393, n. 63.

³⁰ Cic., *Flac.* 47-48.

does not count the Greek witnesses and accusers at Flaccus's trial among them, however. He praises Greek learning by stating, "I grant them literature, I grant them a knowledge of many arts, I do not deny the charm of their speech, the keenness of their intellects, the richness of their diction." He adds, however, that Greeks lack "truth and honour in giving testimony," an understandable position given his role defending Flaccus against Greek witnesses and accusers.³¹ Cicero is generally positive about Greek learning even if he is less glowing in his estimation of Greek conduct. The same is true when he pauses to consider Athens, "where men think humanity, learning, religion, grain, rights, and laws were born, and whence they were spread through all the earth." The chronological distinction allows Cicero to praise Greek learning and past contributions to the arts while setting aside present-day Greek arrogance, loquaciousness, and the like. The narrative that emerges—a model of the degradation of Greek culture over time—is of an older Greece with something to offer contemporary Rome.³² It suggests that over time Greek learning had declined and Greek men had become prone to vice. Even so, the memory of Athens retained "such renown that the now shattered and weakened name of Greece is supported by the reputation of this city."³³ Cicero was not alone in struggling to

³¹ Cic., *Flac.* 9. Sed sunt in illo numero multi boni, docti, prudentes, qui ad hoc iudicium deducti non sunt, multi impudentes, illiterati, leves, quos variis de causis video concitatos. Verum tamen hoc dico de toto genere Graecorum: tribuo illis litteras, do multarum artium disciplinam, non adimo sermonis leporem, ingeniorum acumen, dicendi copiam, denique etiam, si qua sibi alia sumunt non repugno...

Sutton translates *pudens* as "wise" but "modest" is more appropriate given the *impudens* that follows and the discussion about the Greek lack of honor in giving testimony.

³² The term "degradation model" is my own means of conveying Cicero's complex views regarding Greece. I refer to the fifteenth-century use of the degradation model below, pages 63-66 specifically as a strategy of Trebizond's to defend Greece and Greek scholars.

³³ Cic., *Flac.* 62-64.

appropriate Greek culture, nor was he alone in articulating anti-Greek stereotypes even as he acknowledged the contributions of Greeks to the arts.³⁴

Cicero's description of Greeks illustrates the complexities of the Roman concept of Greekness. That concept established a precedent for the linguistic strategies fifteenth-century scholars employed to characterize the Byzantine émigrés of their own day. Agaso drew extensively from these ideas in his 1437 letter to Paulus Regius to construct his presentation of Trebizond, his Latinity, and the *RLV*.

Latinity Challenged: *Ineptia, Loquentia, et Arrogantia*

The Trebizond depicted in the Agaso letter is the prototypical *ineptus, loquax, arrogans Graeculus* of Cicero. Agaso condemns the Cretan's understanding of Latin, knowledge of rhetorical authorities, and the precepts and style in the *RLV*. In the process, he characterizes Trebizond as arrogant in believing himself an expert in subjects he does not understand and shameless in his criticisms of truly learned authorities past and present. Agaso's purpose is to undermine Trebizond's credibility, a goal he makes clear from the beginning of his letter to Regius by explaining how he is sending his friend a work, Trebizond's *RLV*, "suitable only for either your derision or vexation, more stinking of chattering loquaciousness than eloquence." The opening passages of Agaso's letter introduce the main aspects of his portrayal of Trebizond and offer a concise overview of the arguments he unfolds throughout.³⁵ He adds how "absurd and most shameful to Latin

³⁴ On the Hellenization of Rome and anti-Greek stereotypes see Momigliano, 16-21; Spawforth, 3-18; Elizabeth Rawson, *Intellectual Life in the Late Roman Republic* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1985), 7-13; and Erich S. Gruen, *Rethinking the Other in Antiquity* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2011), 1-4, 344-345, 357.

³⁵ Whether Agaso and Regius truly existed, the Agaso letter accurately depicts how humanists spread texts—here, Trebizond's *RLV*—and discussed them by means of their correspondence. Texts were exchanged hand to hand and circulated among friends, who made copies of their own. For an additional

studies it is to receive instruction in speaking Latin from a Greek,” who scarcely knows how to speak Greek and knows Latin even less well.³⁶ Trebizond’s ignorance, Agaso continues, is no obstacle to either his arrogance or shamelessness. “This man,” he explains, “stupid, impertinent, and without honor” wrote “an altogether vulgar introduction” lamenting the collapse of oratory, criticizing medieval commentators, and promising to revive and sustain eloquence himself.³⁷ Agaso contends that eloquence is more than sufficiently sustained by a host of erudite men among whom Trebizond, an indecorous man, does not “blush to thrust his nose.”³⁸ Agaso leans heavily on the classical Roman concept of Greeks in these passages. He characterizes Trebizond as loquacious rather than eloquent and as a man lacking in honor, and implies his arrogance

example, see note 89 and Leonardo Bruni’s request of Guarino during the controversy surrounding Lorenzo da Monachi in 1416.

³⁶ *Collectanea*, 364-365. (1) Tuorum nequaquam mandatorum oblitus...Nihil adhuc quod nostra magnopere studia postulent comperi cum aut vulgaria sint aut illis abundes. Ne tamen vacuum et inanem sumpsisse legationem videar, aliquid quo iocari aut subirasce liceat audias interim faxo. (2) Unum enim tuo vel cachinno vel stomacho dignum opus in manus incidit, cazambanicam redolens loquacitatem verius quam eloquentiam, quo cum auctor Greculus Latinis dicendi rationem aperire profiteatur (est enim De rhetorica liber inscriptus). Ita egregie, vel e grege potius, disserit ut tam facile ei Latine sciendi consuetudinem ademeris quam eloquentie peritiam denegaris. Non dicam quam absurdum sit et Latinis studiis turpissimum ab Greco Latine dicendi rationem accipere, qui vix Grece, male autem Latine sciat.

Monfasani speculates that “*Cazambanica* is an adjective, perhaps related to *gazza* (in Italian, a “female chatterbox”), or to *cazabàn*, a river in Crete.” *Ibid.*, 372.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 365. (3) Ceterum prohemium tractandis de artis preceptis insulsus homo atque ineptus nulla cum dignitate, vulgare ferme, premitit, in quo, cum eloquentiam et eius facultatis libros hisce temporibus fugisse ac cecidisse deploret, eam restituere ac fulcire promittit, presertim cum Alanos Bertolinosque nimium vigere in pretioque esse queratur et accuset. Evas columbas, Prosperos, Chartulas annumerare videtur, oblitus quibus adducere poterat et Bononie natos, Ethiopum terras, Fabasque Guidones. Sed enim incautus homo id non accusat quod est accusandum.

Monfasani explains how “Agaso is listing the standard texts of the medieval Italian curriculum in Latin and the greatest authorities in medieval rhetoric.” He identifies “Evas columbas” as the *incipit* of the *Dittochaeon* of Prudentius, attributes “Prosperos” to Prosper of Aquitaine, and notes “Chartulas” as the opening of the *Carmen de contemptu mundi*, “Ethiopum terras” as the beginning of Theodulus’s *Ecloga*, “Bononie natos” as the opening words of the *ars dictaminis* of Giovanni di Bonandrea, and Guido Faba, “the most famous of the Bolognese *dictatores*.” *Ibid.*, 373. See also Grendler, 116 and 123.

³⁸ *Collectanea*, 366. (7) Tamen inter tantos artis scriptores doctissimosque viventes nasum ingerere importunus homo non erubuit, Aristotelem imitatus, qui cum motus esset Isocratis rhetoris gloria, dicere etiam cepit adolescentes docere et prudentiam cum eloquentia iungere.

by casting him as indecorous in his attacks on learned men. Each of these characterizations is furthermore intended to demonstrate the “absurdity” of accepting instruction from a Greek man lacking knowledge of the Latin language.

Agaso’s continued reliance on classical stereotypes is evident as he outlines what he proclaims to be the foolish principles in the *RLV*, which he explains as functions of the author’s background as an *ineptus* and *arrogans* Greekling more interested in fame than truth. He criticizes, for example, Trebizond’s definition of demonstrative oratory as a “genre assigned to the praise or blame of a particular person.” “That much,” he explains, is “the complete and pure definition of Cicero. But this is not enough for this particular magister. He added, so foolishly and stupidly, ‘*cum amplificatione*.’” The addition, Agaso argues, was solely so Trebizond might appear to have contributed something of his own.³⁹ Agaso likewise criticizes Trebizond’s classification of four parts of an oration as opposed to six, “contrary to every authority ancient and subsequent.” He labels Trebizond a *sciolus* of the Latin language, one whose knowledge is pretentious and superficial, and cites Cicero to brand him as one of “those Greeklings, fonder of argument than truth.”⁴⁰ This is a common refrain. Elsewhere, he accuses Trebizond of foolishly blurting out, no

³⁹ Ibid., 366. (9) Mox desumpto in manus codice, artis precepta percurrenti quot occurrunt ineptie! Verbi gratia: “demonstrativum genus est,” inquit, “quod tribuitur in alicuius certe persone laudem vel vituperationem.” Hactenus Ciceronis absoluta et integra diffinitio est. Verum ea huic ipsi magistro non satis est. Adiecit quam insipienter et insipide: “cum amplificatione”...(10) Hic itidem, ne Ciceronis credatur assertio et aliquid sui videatur afferre, etiam recta premutans, “cum amplificatione” supplevit. Cf. *Rhet. Her.* 1.2.

⁴⁰ *Collectanea*, 366-367. (11) Inde non longe post Neptunius hic magister inventionem divisurus contra veterum omnium et posterorum auctoritatem atque sententiam, quattuor tantum partes enumerat, cum sex esse nemo sanus eat inficias. Sic enim partitur in exordium, narrationem, contentionem, et perorationem. Primum quidem non mediocri vitio conflictatur is qui genus aliquid divisurus in species, in genus potius speciemque partitur, ut si quis dicat: animalia quedam aquatilia sunt, nonnulla terrestria, alia corpus esse constat, cum et hic divisionem, confirmationem et confutationem contentionis esse velit tres unius loci partes. (12) Deinde Latine lingue sciolus parum advertit contentionem, etsi aliud alias, controversiam vel causam vel concertationem appellari, quomodo in Oratore usus est Tullius: “omnem esse contentionem inter homines doctos in verbi controversia positam et Greculos magis contentionis cupidos quam veritatis.” Cf. Cic., *De or.* 1.47.

less shamelessly than unwisely, hundreds of things contrary to the custom of the most learned men. He characterizes Trebizond as ignorant of these authorities, brilliant authors of whom he is a mere copyist.⁴¹ He explains that Trebizond's arrogance leads him to attack these men in pursuit of his own glory. Trebizond is a "public censor" who, refusing to spare anything "to claim for himself from the unlearned a bit of glory," censures Quintilian, "a most learned rhetor and orator."⁴² The end result is a portrayal of Trebizond as a tyrant, an "unskilled and *ineptus* [man] who thinks nothing correct except what he himself made."⁴³

Agaso counts Guarino as one of the learned authorities whom Trebizond unjustly attacks.⁴⁴ His discussion of the two men presents further evidence of Trebizond's lack of Latinity—as well as his lack of honor—by contrasting Trebizond's loquacity with Guarino's eloquence. The distinction follows the classical model and throws into relief some of Agaso's implicit anti-Greek attacks. Despite Guarino's ornate words and sweet style, he explains, Trebizond wrongly attacks the smallest things.⁴⁵ He was wrong, for

⁴¹ *Collectanea*, 366. (6) Sin in tanta dicendi copia, doctrina ordine, subtilitate, dulcedine tam preclara negliguntur auctores, a quibus librarius ipse, si que eruditius ab eo dicta sunt, cuncta transcripsit verius quam excogitavit, quis sua legere volet? I take the description of Trebizond as a copyist as evidence of anti-Greek language. See pages 52-55 below.

⁴² *Collectanea*, 367. (16) Dein, ne ullis parcat huius publici lingua censoris et ab imperitis gloriolam aucupetur, Quintiliano, doctissimo et rhetori et oratori, turpes ignorationis notas conatur iniicere ut sibi decus intercipiat. Quintilianus ab ironia Ciceronem pro Q. Ligarii defensione exordium sumpsisse ait, quod hic noster negat, maleque sensisse Quintilianum Diogenes ipse iactat, quamquam et Martianum et alios peritissimos viros Quintiliano adstipulari certum sit. Cf. Quint., *Inst.* 4.1.38-39.

⁴³ *Collectanea*, 371. (33) Homine enim imperito et inepto nunquam quicquam iniustius est, qui nisi quod ipse fecit nil rectum putat.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 368. (19) Cernere est sexcenta que sibi fingit in somnia queque contra doctissimorum veterum usum et auctoritatem impudenter non minus quam imprudenter effutit. Hec tibi eam ob causam dixerim ut equo patiaris animo quia Guarino, preceptoris nostro, eodem in libro non parcat, harum omnium rerum ignaro et, quod indignius est, hunc talem collaudanti.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 369. (25) "Nam que illius carpente orationis ratio extitit in Franciscum Carmegnolam edite amplissima cum senatus Veneti gloria, que satis pro dignitate laudari non potest? Ornatissima verba, idonea

instance, to argue Guarino ought to have used *scribentium* in his encomium rather than *scriptorum*.⁴⁶ Agaso cites Livy as evidence of the correctness of Guarino's usage and adds a further example "lest our Lycurgus or Minos of the Latin language suppose this was said here by chance rather than deliberate choice." Indeed, Agaso offers a variety of examples—from Cicero's *Ad Herennium* and *Pro Archia*, Servius' *Georgics*, Virgil, and Nonius Marcellus—to prove Trebizond wrong.⁴⁷ His appeal to these authorities is intended to demonstrate Trebizond's ignorance, but it also reinforces the difference between a man who chatters on about things he does not understand and Guarino, whose style is sweet and well informed.

Agaso's anti-Greek language is explicit when he names Trebizond as the author of the criticisms against Guarino. The passage appears roughly half way through his letter, before which point he had referred to Trebizond only as a "Greekling author," a rhetorical slight suggesting Trebizond's name was not worth mentioning. When Agaso finally names Trebizond, he does so via his Greek origins. Noting that Trebizond hailed from Crete, he adds that he will forego personally commenting on the "men of this island

sententiarum frequentia, stilus perquam suavis, enucleatus ad rem atque personam virtutum numerus et ordo, quamquam inexpertus homo Trapezuntius minima carpat, araneas imitatus que muscis aucupandis inhiant.

⁴⁶For Trebizond's initial comment in the *RLV*, see *ibid.*, 363. (8) Cur etiam "scribentium," non "scriptorum" dixerit non intelligo, nisi quod timidum in dicendo hominem, ne a "scripto" "scriptorum" dicere videretur, inscitia deterruit. Sed hec infinita sunt atque idcirco pretermittenda.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 370. (27) Et, ne noster hic lingue Latine Lycurgus aut Minos dictum hoc fortuito potius quam iudicio censeat, legat et Livium primo de secundo bello Punico: 'neque ulla, que in tali re memorabilis scribentibus videri solet, pretermissa clades est,' scribentibus, non scriptoribus dixit... (28) Et quoniam pervicaces non facile cedere solent nisi multis obruantur exemplis, legisse debet apud Ciceronem ad *Herennium*: 'inimicorum persequentissimum,' non persecutorem; et in oratione *Pro Archia*: 'populus enim Romanus aperuit Lucullo imperante Pontum,' potius quam Lucullo imperatore. (29) Accedit et Servius, non minus rhetor facundus quam grammaticus eruditus, qui in tertio *Georgicorum* commento: 'scimus,' inquit, 'esse concessum scribentibus ut iteratione prohemii legentium reficiant interdum laborem,' magis quam scriptoribus et lectorum, ut magister imperat Trapezuntius Num Iuvenalis quoque: 'culpa docentis scilicet arguitur,' magis quam doctoris; Ovidius: 'primi vidistis amantes,' non amatores; Virgilius: 'et amans et femina Dido,' utque Trapezuntio familiariter inducatur exemplum: 'quinque greges illi balantum,' non balantricum. Non. Marcellus, 'venantium telum,' non venatorum esse declaravit?

and their character, lest I appear to revile the learning of the man.” Instead, he cites Paul: “A Cretan is a liar, an evil beast, slothful, and a glutton.”⁴⁸ Agaso casts Trebizond’s attacks here as typical of his culture, an argument to which he returns shortly while discussing again his *ineptia* and *loquentia*. Accusing Trebizond of rendering Cicero “rough and unrefined,” all the while “knowing less of Latin,” Agaso comments that the man is surely aware of Cicero’s warning to Quintus regarding “shameless Greeklings like him”:

And even among the Greeks themselves you must be on your guard against admitting close intimacies, except in the case of the very few, if such are to be found, who are worthy of ancient Greece. As things now stand, indeed, too many of them are untrustworthy, false, and schooled by long servitude in the arts of extravagant adulation. My advice is that these men should all be entertained with courtesy, but that close ties of hospitality or friendship should only be formed with the best of them: excessive intimacies with them are not very trustworthy—for they do not venture to oppose our wishes—and they are not only jealous of our countrymen, but of their own as well.⁴⁹

Agaso makes explicit here what he implies elsewhere, and by citing Cicero he makes clear his debt to the classical Roman model for anti-Greek sentiment. Trebizond, like the Greeks Cicero describes, is untrustworthy, boastful, shameless, and interested more in argument than in truth.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 368. (19) Scire vis quisnam is est qui sic mortuos ac viventes exossat homines? E Creta dudum advectus, quo pruna et cotana, vento. (20) De cuius insule hominibus et eorum ingenio tacebo ipse, ne homini litterato conviciari videar, sed beatum Paulum audies, qui acceptum ab vetusto poeta versum hexametrum de illis breviter explicat: “Cretensis mendax, mala bestia, segnis, et alvus.” Cf. Titus 1:12.

⁴⁹ *Collectanea*, 370. (27) “Infortunatum Ciceronem qui non hec in tempora reservatus es ut Trapezuntius te rudem et impolitum expoliret ac doceret minus Latine scientem, qui tuis in Tusculanis nescio quo pacto effunderis, ‘itaque industrios homines illi studiosos vel potius amantes doloris appellant, qui amatores dicere formidasti, quamquam haud sciam te ne docturus esset! Non enim ignorat quam improbis sique similibus Greculis gravis homo semper obstiteris. (28) Meminit nanque ad Q. fratrem te ita scripsisse: ‘atque etiam e Grecis ipsis diligenter cavende sunt familiaritates preter hominum perpaucorum, si qui sunt vetere Grecia digni. Sic vero fallaces sunt permulti et leves et diuturna servitute ad nimiam assentationem eruditi. Nimie familiaritates eorum neque tam fideles sunt (non enim audent adversari nostris voluntatibus) et vero invident non nostris solum verum etiam suis.’” Cf. Cic., *Q. Fr.* 1.16. For the preceding text, see note 47.

The characterizations Agaso outlines lead him to argue that Trebizond is unfit to instruct anyone in the study of rhetoric. It is an assertion with significant implications. There is too often a tendency in reading humanist invective to consider such attacks petty or meaningless. Humanist strategies to cultivate honor could have significant consequences and Agaso indicates the implications of his criticisms when he argues that Trebizond is likely to leave his students less knowledgeable—“dumber by half”—for having had him as their instructor. He suggests instead that Trebizond should be removed from teaching and that his salary should be “vomited back up again.” The precedent had already been set, he explains, years earlier when Trebizond had taught in Vicenza. During that time, he furnished his pupils “with stories and foolishness” and was cast out of the city.⁵⁰ Whether this is true is unknown. Trebizond did leave his position in Vicenza in 1428 and later blamed Guarino for driving him out.⁵¹ Whether the assertion was true or not, Agaso’s letter suggests the very real implications of these contests. Agaso not only defends Guarino but questions Trebizond’s aptitude for instructing patrician youths, a main source of income for humanists.

Agaso’s comment on Trebizond’s aptitude as an instructor is also an allusion to a figure who, in the *Pro Flacco*, epitomizes the *ineptus* and *loquax* Greek: Heraclides.⁵² Monfasani does not cite the reference, but the parallels are clear and amplify Agaso’s preceding characterizations of Trebizond. Heraclides was “the chief man instigating all

⁵⁰ *Collectanea*, 367. (15) Eat igitur Greculus ipse, et discipulus esse discat qui magister esse nescit. Alioquin dimidio stultiores redditurus est discipulos quam accepit. Et intercepta salaria revomenda; Ibid., 368. (20) Hic est qui aliquot ante annis Vicentiam, oppidum vetus ac nobile, publico salario conductus, dum fabulis iuventutem implet et ineptiis, explosus et exhibilatus est.

⁵¹ Ibid., 405. (102) Explosum me quondam e Vincentia exhibilatumque dicis. Tua opera qui me vicinum nolebas.

⁵² Cic., *Flac.* 42-49. Rawson cites Heraclides as an example of how easy it was “to stir up distrust of a Greek rhetor in the courts.” Rawson, 77.

the Greeks” against Flaccus. Cicero describes him as *ineptus et loquax*, eager for recognition [*ambitiosus*], and later, both *audax* and again *loquax*. He was a rhetor and teacher who was overly confident of his learning and who “claimed he could teach others the art of speaking.”⁵³ Cicero also describes Heraclides as one accused and convicted of numerous charges, including his slander of Hermippus.⁵⁴ Heraclides was for Agaso the perfect figure to signify Greek loquacity, arrogance, and abuse. Like Cicero’s description of Heraclides, Agaso portrays Trebizond as *ineptus* and *loquax*. Like Heraclides, Trebizond arrogantly believes himself capable of teaching the art of speaking. Both men are eager for recognition and Agaso cites Trebizond’s pursuit of glory as the reason he attacks authorities such as Quintilian.⁵⁵ That Agaso intended his comment regarding Trebizond’s instruction as an allusion to Heraclides is evident in that he quotes Cicero’s descriptions almost verbatim. Despite his criticisms of Heraclides’s abilities, Cicero acknowledges that “this professor of oratory did have some rich young pupils, whom he made dumber by half than when he had taken them.”⁵⁶ Trebizond too has some wealthy pupils, as Agaso makes clear. When he calls for Trebizond to be removed from his

⁵³ Cic., *Flac.* 42. Caput est omnium Graecorum concitandorum, qui cum accusatoribus sedet, Heraclides ille Temnites, homo ineptus et loquax, sed ut sibi videtur, ita doctus ut etiam magistrum illorum se esse dicat. At, qui ita sit ambitiosus ut omnis vos nosque cotidie persalutet, Temni usque ad illam aetatem in senatum venire non potuit et qui se artem dicendi traditurum etiam ceteris profiteatur, ipse omnibus turpissimis iudiciis victus est; Cic., *Flac.* 48. Sed cum se homo volubilis quadam praecipiti celeritate dicendi in illa oratione iactaret, repente testimoniis Fufiorum nominibusque recitatis homo audacissimus pertimuit, loquacissimus obmutuit.

⁵⁴ For the abuse of Hermippus, see page 36 above.

⁵⁵ For Agaso’s discussion of Trebizond as *ineptus* and *loquax*, his criticisms of Trebizond’s claims that he can teach the art of speaking, and his characterization of Trebizond’s pursuit of glory see pages 38-41.

⁵⁶ I retain Sutton’s translation in the first part of the sentence but offer my own translation of the latter part to make clear how Agaso’s criticism of Trebizond parallels Cicero’s characterization of Heraclides. Cic., *Flac.* 47. Habebat enim rhetor iste adulescentis quosdam locupletis, quos dimidio redderet stultiores quam acceperat...

teaching position to avoid rendering his students “dumber by half,” it is to Heraclides, the quintessential *ineptus*, *loquax*, and *arrogans* Greek that Agaso alludes.

Agaso uses the Heraclides allusion as a cautionary tale that fifteenth-century pedagogues would have understood well. His suggestion that Trebizond should have his salary revoked and his discussion of the expulsion from Vicenza reflect the seriousness with which humanist educators viewed poor instructors who greatly complicated the learning process. Guarino himself accepted this premise. Battista Guarino (1434-1513), Guarino’s son, penned an educational treatise he describes as “the program of teaching and the precepts of study which my father, who was as learned as he was excellent...used to teach his pupils.”⁵⁷ His arguments can be understood as indicative of his father’s program of study. Quoting the *Pro Flacco*, Battista Guarino argues “it is of capital importance not to hand over beginning pupils to coarse and uneducated teachers. For the pupils of such men as Cicero says, return ‘dumber by half’ than when they left.” The danger lay not only in leading students astray but also in the effort required to undo the damage done by an unlearned teacher.⁵⁸ Similarly, Pier Paolo Vergerio (1370-1444) also argued for the importance of youths becoming “accustomed to the best” teachers from the

⁵⁷ This and all subsequent translations are Kallendorf’s. For all of the treatises in Kallendorf’s edited collection, I cite the section numbers provided by Kallendorf. Battista Guarino, *De ordine docendi et studendi*, trans. and ed. Craig W. Kallendorf, in *Humanist Educational Treatises* (Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 39.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 4. In primis autem id cavendum erit ne rudibus et indoctis ab initio praeceptoribus tradantur erudiendi, a quibus illud Ciceronis consequantur, ut ‘dimidio stultiores,’ redeant quam accesserint. Ut enim tempus taceam quid amittunt: efficitur profecto illud Timoethei musici, ut postea duplex suscipiendus sit labor: alter quo ea quae didicerunt oblivioni tradant—quid sane difficillimum...alter, ut ad meliores praeceptiones evehantur, quod etiam eo tardius fit, quo in prioribus illis oblitterandis necesse est operam tempusque consumere. Kallendorf notes the references to Cic., *Flac.* 47 and to Quint., *Inst.* 2.3.2-3.

beginning. He explained that if “they imbibe any errors, twice as much time will be needed: to shake out errors, and then to inculcate true precepts.”⁵⁹

The Agaso letter defined the terms of the conflict between the two men. Trebizond’s task in his response to Guarino was to answer the challenges laid at his feet. This meant addressing the accusations regarding his learning and Latinity as well as the resultant claims regarding his aptitude as an instructor and authority of rhetoric. It also meant grappling with the anti-Greek language Agaso used and the stereotypes that informed that language.

Latinity Defended

Trebizond’s 1437 *Responsio* to Guarino was his chance to construct an alternative definition of himself to counter Agaso’s characterization of him as an *ineptus, loquax, arrogans Graeculus*. To do so he had to demonstrate a mastery of Latin and prove his Latinity. That the majority of his effort was spent defending his Latinity indicates how important he considered that strategy to his self-presentation. He struggled with Agaso’s labels and his response illustrates the pressure he felt as a Greek to establish his Latin *bona fides*. To that end, he directly engaged Agaso on the technical arguments Agaso had raised against him, much as Agaso had considered Trebizond’s specific criticisms of Guarino. A few examples suffice to demonstrate this. To the accusation that in lamenting the collapse of rhetorical study he had disparaged a host of venerated authors, Trebizond makes a distinction between speaking with the art and speaking about the art. True, he acknowledges, the authors Agaso cites are examples of good rhetorical practice, but they

⁵⁹ Pier Paolo Vergerio, *De ingenuis moribus et liberalibus adulescentiae studiis liber*, in *Humanist Educational Treatises*, ed. Kallendorf, 49. Ergo si melioribus initio assueverint, illos habebunt praecipuos et veluti ducibus semper utentur. Sin vero errores ullos imbiberint, his duplici tempore opus erit, primum ut errores excutiant, ac deinde ut vera praecepta condiscant.

contributed nothing to a discussion of the art itself.⁶⁰ In response to Agaso's criticisms of his grammatical usage, he recalls Guarino's previous feud with Poggio regarding Caesar and Scipio. Here, Trebizond mocks Guarino's misinterpretation of Livy and likens his comprehension of the text and his ability to discuss it to that of a student.⁶¹ To Agaso's complaint that he identifies four rather than six parts of an oration, Trebizond explains that Cicero himself eventually rejected the six-part scheme laid out in *De oratore* in favor of four parts.⁶² In each case, Trebizond's efforts serve dual purposes, to undermine Guarino's claims of knowledge while making clear his own skill as a Latinist.

⁶⁰ *Collectanea*, 383. (9) Cum autem nobis in illis libris, ut orationes declamationesque maiorum intelligere ac imitari valeamus, non ex arte, sed de arte dicere propositum sit, que duo inter se adeo differreasserit Cicero ut multi de arte bene, nihil ex arte dicere potuerint, cur tu Isocratem ac Demosthenem, quos nihil de arte scripsisse constat, nobis obiicis? Aut cur declamationes nescio cuius orationesque Ciceronis, que nobis multa huius artificii ornamenta perperunt, in medium proferes?... (10) Tu ipse fateris Ciceronem sua retractasse quoniam adolescenti vel "inchoata vel rudia exciderunt." Itaque fit ut nisi ad Grecos refugias, nihil habeas. Non dico hec quod mihi plurima Cicero artis principia non tradiderit, sed tuis verbis ostendo partim que retractata ab auctore suo predicas, ea tibi sic magna videri non debere ut, nisi mente captus sis, alia non querites, partim nihil tibi fere ex tam multis reliqui fieri, quod probes, ut videas deplorandum profecto nobis fuisse quod tantos optimorum librorum cumulos amiserimus et meos codices ut animo, sic sermone amplectaris. Cf. Agaso's argument, pages 39-40 above and *Collectanea*, 365. (4) Nam Aristotelis, Isocratis, Hermogenis, Demosthenis, Victorini, Boetii, Augustini, Quintiliani, Ciceronis, aliorumque complurimum omissa recordatio <est>, quorum volumina, Rhetorica, Orator, De oratore, Partitiones, Institutiones oratorie, Declamationes, orationes, commentaria satis superque ad fulciendam eloquentiam forent nisi tempora vel mores sic adversarentur ut nos potius libris quam libri nobis defuisse videantur.

⁶¹ *Collectanea*, 386. (22) Et cum testem T. Livium citares, quod pusillanimis civis fuisset Scipio, in te ipsum adduxisti. Quid enim rudius quam cum scribat Livius prestantem fuisse virum P. Scipionem, belli tamen artibus quam pacis prestantiorem, his verbis, 'pacis artibus,' pusillanimum illum putare neque videre prestantiam in omnibus attestatum homini Livium? Que cum in pacis et belli artibus ei partita sit, si utraque in re qualis fuerit Scipio scire cupis, prestans, inquit; si in utra prestantior, in belli artibus, inquit. Tu prestans illud, quod Livius quasi genus posuerat, pro pusillanimo interpretaris. Ita litteraturam tenes. Sic textus discipulis exponis. For the Scipio-Caesar controversy between Guarino and Poggio see Chapter Three, pages 108-109.

⁶² *Collectanea*, 388. (30) "At veteres et posteriores sexpartito partiuntur." Audite, audite, omnes, atque attendite quanta sit Guarini peritia. Cicero in his voluminibus que ipso teste retractavit sex, in Partitionibus statim in principio nobis his verbis astipulatur: "quatuor orationis sunt partes," inquit, "exordium, narratio, concertatio, peroratio." Audis, Guarine? Vidisti unquam hunc locum? Centies oculis scio, sed mente nunquam. Si Ciceronis ergo auctoritate, Aristotelis, Grecorumque omnium movemur, quatuor, sin aliorum quorumcunque vis, sex existimabimus. Verum qui sex dicunt, percipiendi commoditatem, non rei veritatem secuti sunt. Ergo nos et cur quatuor et quomodo sex aperuimus ut et Ciceronem in Partitionibus intelligas et ceteros non asperneris. For Agaso's complaint, see page 40 above. Cf. Cic., *De or.* 1.47 and Cic., *Part. or.* 4, 27.

In articulating these technical arguments, Trebizond sometimes explicitly recognizes Agaso's accusations as anti-Greek. In fact, he pauses at one point to justify his criticisms of Guarino and his defense of the *RLV*, and in doing so he outlines the dilemma facing him by referring directly to the concept of Greek *levitas*:

What should I say? What should I do? To whom should I turn? If I say I discovered many things [in Guarino's writing], changed them for the better and made them clearer, although this is true, I will nevertheless be blamed for arrogance, and Guarino will exclaim about the "*levitas*" of the Greek man!⁶³

Trebizond acknowledges here the conundrum posed by his Greekness. If he defends himself, he risks living up to Agaso's characterization of him as a stereotypical arrogant Greek interested only in seeking glory for himself at the expense of others. It is worth noting, however, that Agaso never explicitly accuses the Greeks or Trebizond of *levitas*.⁶⁴ Trebizond's use of the term suggests that he recognizes the totality of Agaso's case against him—in essence a series of accusations that his behavior lacks honor and dignity—as Agaso acting out an overarching stereotype of *levitas*. It also indicates that Trebizond is clearly aware of how much that stereotype complicates his defense.

To combat accusations of arrogance and *levitas*, Trebizond repeatedly claims that what he has written about the art of speaking, including his criticisms of Guarino's style, has value for general use [*communis utilitas*]. The emphasis he places on his contributions to Latin studies is also an important part of his defense of his Latinity. He begins the letter to Guarino by noting that when he received the Agaso letter, he did not respond by retracting what he had said, "those things we wrote for general use [*communis*

⁶³ *Collectanea*, 393. (48) Quid dicam? Quid faciam? Quo me vertam? Si me multa invenisse, multa in melius mutasse, multa illustrasse dixero, etsi id verum sit, culpabitur tamen arrogantia, et 'Greci hominis levitatem!' Guarinus exclamabit.

⁶⁴ The exception is when Agaso quotes Cicero. See page 43 above.

utilitas].”⁶⁵ In the middle of the letter, he explains that if he allows Agaso’s criticisms of his books—“which many eminent men judge pertain to general use [*communis utilitas*]”—to stand, he fears that “the false accusations of my enemies [will] detract more from the general good [*commune commodum*] than from me.” He maintains that his work is useful for his contemporaries and for posterity.⁶⁶ The work, he continues, demonstrates how much he has to offer to orators and to the art of speaking.⁶⁷

Trebizond’s technical arguments represent one set of strategies he employs to demonstrate his Latinity, but he also appeals to his spoken eloquence. This too is evidence of his direct engagement with Agaso, who had had a number of unflattering things to say about Trebizond’s speaking style. For example, Agaso recalls a story an unnamed patrician told to him wherein a crowd of Guarino’s former students and supporters confronted Trebizond.⁶⁸ Many in the crowd, the patrician reported, spoke at length about Guarino’s prudence and the elegance, sweetness, and clarity of his speech. In a Homeric reference that seems an implicit slight of Trebizond, the patrician told

⁶⁵ *Collectanea*, 381. (1) Postquam vero ad me tua oratiuncula vix delata est, non his que scripsimus tantum, hoc est, communi utilitati, indigne detrahi, sed librorum quoque auctorem contumeliis peti abste iniuria perspexi, quodque iniquissimum est et tibi vel tuorum iudicio turpissimum, non tuo in me aperte sed, ne commodius me defendam, occulte ac timide sub Agasonis nomine invectus es.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 393. (48) Sin libros, quos non nihil ad utilitatem communem et multi et preclari viri pertinere arbitrantur, non tutabor, ambigam oportet ne invidorum calumnia plus communi commodo quam mihi detraxerit. Quin ego me balantum familiarem, ut Guarinus dicit, esse fatebor, si, cum inimicum videam in Agasonem versum ut ut et mihi licentius ac tutius convicietur, et sibi tum multa alia falso arroget, tum vel maxime illud de Nestore Homericum ad se transferat, cuius e lingua melle dulcior fluebat oratio, nequid ipse, qui ad communem usum et equalibus et posteris non nulla contuli, de me ipso dicam? See note 63 for the preceding text.

⁶⁷ *Collectanea*, 394. (52) Me vero multa quoque peperisse ac usu oratorum animadvertisse utilia robustaque dicendi precepta ipse codex demonstrat.

⁶⁸ For more on the patrician’s testimony see pages 52-53 and 74-75 below. The patrician’s testimony is an interesting component of the Agaso letter that reflects the importance of audience in acts of self-presentation. By drawing upon supposed third-party accounts, Agaso suggests that Trebizond’s reputation, in this case his lack of eloquence, is well known. Agaso’s letter was meant to be circulated and read and the patrician’s testimony amplifies his criticisms by making them seem consistent with the judgments of others.

Agaso how Guarino's supporters described how "from his [Guarino's] tongue, as Homer said about Nestor, speech flowed sweeter than honey." Trebizond did not fare as well when the patrician compared his speech to Guarino's. According to him, whenever Trebizond speaks, he chews his words, speaks with a snort, and mumbles like "a thick swarm of bees in a hollow oak."⁶⁹

The passage is interesting because of the bold response it elicits from Trebizond, which illustrates how crucial Latinity was to his self-presentation. He argues that if Guarino had ever heard him speak or had asked anybody who had, he "would praise my voice as much as my spirit and my Latinity, and would proclaim I had been born not in Greece but in Rome, not in these times but in the age of Cicero." Monfasani considers this passage representative of the "braggadocio and buffoonery" of the letter, and cites as evidence Trebizond's description of how Guarino would marvel at the sweetness of his composition, be overwhelmed by his skills and would finally, with creaking knees and blushing face, acknowledge his eloquence.⁷⁰ At the same time, Trebizond mocks

⁶⁹ Ibid., 368-369. (22) Tum frequentes ad eum, ut pharmacopolam, auditores accurrebant, recentem adhuc Guarini cum caritate memoriam disciplinamque retinentes. Proinde audire erat varias de Guarino predicationes: alius prudentiam, ille comitate conditam gravitatem, nonnulli ingenium et legendi suavitatem ac evidentiam, quidam scribendi facundiam nec minus orandi dulcedinem extollebant, cum ex eius lingua, ut de Nestore dixit Homerus, melle dulcior flueret oratio. Quas ob laudes animosus in primis homo Trapezuntius eum sibi parem ferre non valens absentis honori detractare cepit et invidie stimulis agitatus et emulationis facibus incensus ista in eum maledicta scriptis evomuit, quasi vel Guarinum, qui docta per ora volitat, sua spoliare commendatione queat vel se alienis conviciis in peioris comparatione adornare, qui quotiens lectionem exponendam aggreditur, verba mandit, balba de nare loquitur, vocem suffocat et, urentes quasi fabas, infringat, non tam profert quam immurmurat; credas densum crabronum examen intra cavam quercum instrepere.

Cf. Hom., *Il.* 2.87. The bee imagery may be an extension of the Homeric reference to Nestor and an allusion to Homer describing the Greeks gathering for assembly as a dense swarms of bees. The characterization may suggest that Trebizond has all the eloquence of a dense, incoherent mob. It may also suggest Trebizond is like the Greek warriors in the mob Homer describes, the intent being to focus on Trebizond's aggression and anger. Agaso's likening of Guarino to Nestor emphasizes Guarino's eloquence but may also suggest his wise counsel, as Nestor had advised reconciliation between Agamemnon and Achilles. The contrast could distinguish Guarino's wisdom, eloquence, and modesty from Trebizond's aggression, violence, and Achilles-like rage.

⁷⁰ Monfasani, *George of Trebizond*, 31.

Guarino's distorted speech and pronunciation.⁷¹ Although the passage is deliberately boastful, it is more than just buffoonery. It is part of Trebizond's consistent effort to defend his eloquence and reputation to a community that required Latin eloquence. It is not without reason that he twice refers to his Latinity here—first when he argues that Guarino would praise him for his Latinity and again when he claims Guarino would think Trebizond had been born in Cicero's Rome. This is not the only time he adamantly defends his eloquence. Early on, he accuses Guarino of creating the Agaso pseudonym because “you cannot endure George's eloquence,” which had long left him trembling.⁷² Here, however, Trebizond defends his speech as a specifically Latin eloquence.

The importance of *Latin* eloquence is also clear in Agaso's attempt to label Trebizond as a copyist, one of his implicitly anti-Greek attacks. He makes this charge when questioning the value of the *RLV*. If, Agaso asks, one accepts Trebizond's premise that the works of so many brilliant men and the study of rhetoric have been neglected, why would anybody choose to read the *RLV*, the work of a copyist [*librarius*], over the originals?⁷³ Agaso's question casts doubt on the value of the copyist, the most common

⁷¹ *Collectanea*, 386-387. (23) Deinde balbutire audes in exponenda lectione, verba me mandere, balba de nare loqui, vocem suffocare, nec tam proferre quam immurmurare. Si audisses tu me, Guarine, aut si saltem ab iis qui audiverunt querere voluisses (dicam aperte non ut me laudem, sed ut iniuria circumventum defendam), tam vocem, quam spiritum, quam Latinitatem laudares, nec me in Grecia ortum, sed Rome, nec his temporibus, sed Ciceronis etate natum predicares. Nam suavitate compositionis premulsus, verborum gravitate contusus, scientiarum oppressus pondere, pronuntiatione attonitus, vi denique argumentorum perterritus, etiam si tacere cuperes, tremore tamen genuum, trepidatione vocis, et vultus confusione quid sentiret animo spiritu, Stentore sonantius conclamares. Proinde, irride tu quidem et detorque os, ac verba comprime, ut soles, lipposque oculos tuos anteaquam tenacissimis e dentibus syllaba elabatur, huc atque illuc, quasi rabie concitus, centies circumferas, ac in singulis pronunciandis verbis non parva temporum spatia interpone ut que in scribendo tam tarditas quam incommoditas tibi inest, ea etiam in dicendo inesse videatur.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 382. (5) Vident enim omnes atque intelligunt versute sic te inscripsisse quoniam orationem Georgii ferre non posses, cuius vim dicendi iam exhorruisses.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 366. (6). See note 41.

literary position open to and filled by Byzantine émigrés.⁷⁴ Agaso suggests that the role was hardly impressive, a point he makes again when offering the patrician's testimony. The patrician, Agaso reports, had praised Trebizond specifically for his ability to rise above the role of copyist: "And no small amount of esteem and praise ought to be given to Trebizond as is fitting for one who, once a copyist drawn from Crete to the eminent nobility of the patrician order, secured for himself a greater position by means of his virtue and the strength of his talent."⁷⁵ Though it is clear from Agaso's earlier comments that he is not willing—whereas the patrician is willing—to accept Trebizond as anything more than a copyist, the patrician's testimony does reinforce Agaso's underlying premise that copyists held a lower status than other men of learning.⁷⁶ The role of copyist offered opportunity, but there was an assumption that true talent allowed one to attain positions of greater prestige. Agaso uses that assumption as means to undermine Trebizond's Latinity and *RLV*.

Trebizond's response indicates that he understood public perceptions regarding copyists and the underlying standard of Latin eloquence to which humanists were held. That he felt anxiety about being labeled a copyist is clear from the fact that he replies directly to the label when describing his early education in Italy. He admits that when he

⁷⁴ Harris, 124; Reynolds and Wilson, 148.

⁷⁵ *Collectanea*, 368. (21) Huius bellissimi viri ingratitude et de preceptore maledicta cum in aliquem cetum patriciorum nuper increparem, hoc ab eorum uno et quidem excellentissimo eidemque familiarissimo responsum accepi: "Hic est, si forte, hospes, ignoras, Georgius Trapezuntius nomine," inquit, "qui superiori [sic] tempore, cum ludum aperiret, modo non eloquentie fontes polliceri coepit. Et sane Trapezuntio non parva commendatio laudesque debentur ut qui librarius olim ad insignem patricii ordinis virum e Creta conductus pro ipsius virtute ac ingenii ardore maiorem sibi gradum adoptavit."

Monfasani's edition reads "cum in aliquem cetum patriciorum." The *aliquem* must be an *aliquorum* and taken with the *patriciorum*. I do not know if this is a mistake in the manuscripts or in Monfasani's edition. He does not note the spelling in his apparatus.

⁷⁶ Agaso also includes the patrician's comment because the patrician went on to describe how he had supposedly witnessed Guarino's students speak in defense of their instructor and Trebizond publicly slander Guarino. See pages 74-75.

had arrived in Italy at the behest of Francesco Barbaro, Barbaro had asked him if he would be willing to transcribe Greek codices. Trebizond had replied that he “preferred to devote my efforts to my Latin letters.”⁷⁷ Monfasani rightly reads this commitment to Latin studies as evidence of Trebizond’s attempts to assimilate to Latin culture.⁷⁸ Trebizond’s descriptions of his early Latin education are clear attempts to present himself as a skilled Latinist. He explains how he was unable to speak or understand a word of Latin upon his arrival and elsewhere describes how he “scarcely knew the shape of the Latin letters.” He boasts that after a few years he was able to “keep two very fast scribes busy while speaking on two subjects at the same time.”⁷⁹ He describes his rapid progress as a result of his diligence and a series of important instructors. He credits Barbaro, the “most brilliant physician” Nicholas Leonardus, and finally Vittorino da Feltre, whom he names as his true Latin instructor.⁸⁰ The latter figure is of particular importance. By

⁷⁷ *Collectanea*, 397. (67) “Venisti de Grecia missus librarius,” inquit, “ad insignem virum patricii ordinis,” quem non nominas, veritus ne tua fallatia sinceritate ipsius evertatur. (68) Ego nomen apponam, quoniam post deum preclarissimam genere, virtute, doctrina militem Franciscum Barbarum huius quicquid in me est auctorem habeo, apud quem te monstrante, cum vix figuras Latinarum litterarum pernoscerem, prima didici rudimenta... (69) Illico enim cum venissem, interrogatus ab eo, te presente, si vellem Grecos codices transcribere, Latinis me dare operam letteris velle dixi. Cui actutum ille: et ego tibi, ut discas, optimam commoditatem prestabo. Ita librarium me missum usque ad hos dies ignorabam; Guarinus sciebat, qui consuluit.

⁷⁸ Monfasani, *George of Trebizond*, 11.

⁷⁹ *Collectanea*, 394. (53) Nam eius vires quante sint nos tibi exemplo sumus, qui maiusculi quam vigennes cum in Italiam venissemus, monstro multis fuimus cum nec dicere nec percipere quicquam a quoquam possemus. Paucissimis deinde annis et Latine ita locuti sumus ut in duabus causis duobus velocissimis in scribendo librariis eodem tempore dicendo suffecerimus, et <precepta> doctrinarum omnium bonarumque artium, addam etiam, ut magis doleas, ipsius theologie, cui relique omnes administrantur (pauca quidem, sed tamen que tibi ad celos usque coacervata viderentur) percepimus, et, nisi onere filiorum oppressi et validudine deiecti, litterarum studia pene liquissemus. Singulare iam ingenii specimen invidorum victa protervia de nobis edere facile possemus.

⁸⁰ I use Vittorino’s Italian name. Trebizond uses his Latin name Victorinus Feltrensis. *Ibid.*, 397. (67) Preceptorem enim te meum fingis, cum ego Greca a meis, Latina a Victorino Feltrensi acceperim; *Ibid.*, 398 (72) Vix duorum mensium illa tua fuit doctrina in transcribendo, non in discendo me penitus occupato, si tamen doctrina sit appellanda primorum elementorum confusa cognitio. Postquam inde ad clarissimi physici Nicolai de Leonardis domum profectus sum, duce illo ad quem missus fuero, ut domum, ita doctorem mutavi.

naming Vittorino, an Italian, as his Latin instructor, Trebizond was implicitly attempting to strengthen his claims of eloquence and prove his Latin *bona fides* against Agaso's claims that he was no more than a Greekling copyist. In fact, Trebizond implies, he is a skilled Latinist precisely because Vittorino—a learned, eloquent Italian—instructed him. Trebizond's description of this period stresses his desire to attain glory through Latin but should also be read as a clear repudiation of Agaso's attempt to limit him to the role of copyist. Trebizond is clear here that his interest had always been in honing his Latin skills, not in copying Greek texts, and perhaps even more importantly that he had developed the skill set required of a master Latinist. He recognized the danger of being pigeonholed as a copyist and relegated to the status of a second-class scholar.

In Defense of Greece

In addition to defending his Latinity, Trebizond often goes to great lengths to defend the value of Greeks and their literature in response to Agaso's anti-Greek language. Trebizond's defense of Greece appears at times to contradict his defense of his Latinity. This is the case when he distances himself from the role of the Greek copyist and implies a tacit acceptance of a standard of learning that values Latinity over Greekness. The two strategies make clear the complicated experiences of Greek émigrés as individuals torn between two worlds. Trebizond clearly felt pressured to assimilate to life in Italy but could not distance himself completely from his background. Agaso's letter indicates that certain individuals would not allow him to do so. Beyond that, Trebizond's background did create professional opportunities. His defense of Greek studies shows that he wanted to take advantage of these opportunities, but struggled with how to do so. His struggle explains Monfasani's correct observation that as much as

Trebizond assimilated to Latin culture, he never abandoned his Greek patriotism.⁸¹

Trebizond's defense of Greek studies is also indicative of how early fifteenth-century humanism simultaneously articulated an anti-Greek bias and an argument in favor of Greek learning.

There was a firm foundation in Quattrocento Italy on which Trebizond could draw to justify the value of Greek learning in response to the Agaso letter in 1437. A useful pair of examples are the letters of Guarino and his student Francesco Barbaro in response to Lorenzo da Monachi's 1416 public condemnation of Greek studies as fruitless.⁸²

Lorenzo was then secretary to the Venetian Senate, chancellor of Crete, and a friend of both Leonardo Bruni and Barbaro. Barbaro's perspective is of particular interest because, if we accept the premise that Agaso was really one of Guarino's students, Barbaro's steadfast defense of Greek studies is inconsistent with Agaso's anti-Greek attacks. That one of Guarino's students (Barbaro) so resolutely defended Greek learning makes it difficult to understand why Agaso (supposedly another of Guarino's students) used such forceful anti-Greek language against Trebizond. His language is even harder to fathom because Agaso did not qualify it, as for instance Cicero did, by distinguishing between the general benefits of Greek learning on the one hand and specific "bad" Greeks on the other.⁸³ Though hardly conclusive evidence, this inconsistency makes it plausible that Agaso was, as Trebizond believed, not really Guarino's student. The inconsistency

⁸¹ Monfasani, *George of Trebizond*, 130.

⁸² Deno Geanakoplos discusses the context of the da Monachi comments in "The Discourse of Demetrius Chalcondyles on the Inauguration of Greek Studies at the University of Padua in 1463," *Studies in the Renaissance* 21 (1974): 130-1. See also Sarah Stever Gravelle, "Lorenzo Valla's Comparison of Latin and Greek and the Humanist Background," *Bibliothèque d'Humanisme et Renaissance* 44, no.2 (1982): 269-273.

⁸³ See my discussion of the "degradation model" above, note 32. Although Agaso makes no such distinction, I argue Trebizond does follow Cicero when arguing in defense of Greece. See pages 63-66.

remains, of course, if Guarino really did compose the letter. In that case, Agaso's language could be understood as a deliberate attempt of Guarino's to attack Trebizond as a Greek without attaching his own name to anti-Greek slander. As a learned orator, Guarino would have been able to argue both sides of the issue, in this case marshaling anti-Greek language to attack a Greek opponent while himself believing in the importance of Greek literature. Speculation aside, Trebizond, firmly believing Agaso to be Guarino, later employed a defense of Greek learning similar to the one Guarino and Barbaro had articulated.

Guarino responds to da Monachi's comments and defends Greek studies in a 1416 letter to Nicholas Perondolus with the argument that Greek studies are useful and necessary to Latin studies.⁸⁴ He characterizes Greek letters as both joyful and useful to Latins and "bound to Latin letters by such an affinity and necessity that you would not unreasonably call them mother and daughter." He cites their utility for "all the liberal arts and sciences," suggesting that some things can only be conveyed properly in Greek, and quotes Horace's exhortation: "page through the Greek models day and night...the Muse gave genius to the Greeks; to the Greeks she gave the ability to speak with smoothness and polish."⁸⁵ Ancient Romans, Guarino contends, so valued Greek letters that nearly all were learned in them. He concludes by appealing to his own famous Greek instructor,

⁸⁴ Guarino of Verona to Niccolò Perondolo, Venice, 1416, in *Epistolario di Guarino Veronese*, ed. Remigio Sabbadini, vol. 1, *Testo* (Venice: A spese della Società, 1915), 98-99.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 98-99. Gaudeo et magnopere te collaudo, quod summa cum ratione ad graecarum studia litterarum te vehementer anhelantem aspicio; quae tam iocundae tam utiles nostris hominibus sunt et latinis litteris tanta cognatione ac necessitudine devinctae, ut matrem ac filiam non iniuria dixeris et "qui utramvis norit, ambas ferme norit." Id adeo verum est, ut omnes liberales artes, omnes scientiae, quibus latinitas utitur, graeca prae se ferant nomina, immo si latinis appellentur vocabulis, quasi mutata veste ac habitu, vix dignosci queant. Quocirca non absurdum illud Horatii praeceptum: "vos exemplaria graeca nocturna versate manu versate diurna;" quidni? "Graiis ingenium, Graiis dedit ore rotundo musa loqui." Cf. Hor., *Ars. P.* 208 and 323.

Chrysoloras, who explained that the decline in Latin studies was a result of the decline in Greek.⁸⁶ Further evidence of Guarino's position can be found in his son's educational treatise. Battista Guarino is even more emphatic than his father on the importance of Greek, arguing:

I shall proclaim it loudly: no one can get completely to the bottom and into the marrow, so to speak, of prosody without knowledge of Greek. I know there are many people who say it is unnecessary for Latin literature. These are people who are themselves ignorant of Greek and want everyone else to be equally ignorant, so that if they may not be judged superior to others, at least they can avoid being thought inferior. For my part...I shall believe that Greek is not only useful but absolutely essential for Latin letters.⁸⁷

and:

We follow the example of the learned men of old, none of whom were ignorant of Greek; and the authority of Quintilian, who says that our literature flowed from the Greek; and of Cicero, who holds that Greek literature should receive the credit if Cato speaks with more learning in [Cicero's] book *On Old Age* than he had been used to do in his own books; and the exhortation of Horace...⁸⁸

Battista Guarino's defense is important not only as evidence of his father's position but as evidence of the codification of that position into educational precept.

Barbaro, unlike Guarino, wrote directly to da Monachi, and his response offers a similar though more extensive set of arguments than Guarino's.⁸⁹ He argues that today's

⁸⁶ Guarino of Verona to Niccolò Perondolo, *Epistolario*, ed. Sabbadini, 99. Quod apud maiores nostros ita servatum est, ut neminem ferme sine graecarum eruditione litterarum comperias: adeo ut Mario clarissimo imperatori vitio et infamiae obiecta sit graecae ignoratio litteraturae. Et profecto verum est quod a clarissimo philosopho et huius aetatis lumine Manuele Chrysolora dici saepenumero audiebam, a quo manavit quicquid graecorum hodie studiorum ad nostrates derivatum est homines. Is crebro commemorare solebat maximarum rerum scientiam et doctissimos illos apud nostros defecisse viros, cum graeca defecere studia.

⁸⁷ Battista Guarino, *De ordine docendi et studendi*, in *Humanist Educational Treatises*, ed. Kallendorf, 16.

⁸⁸ Ibid., 17. Kallendorf notes the comparisons to Quint., *Inst.*, 1.1.12; Cic., *Acad.* 2.2.5; Sen. 8.26.

⁸⁹ Francesco Barbaro to Lorenzo da Monachi, Venice, in *Epistolario*, ed. Claudio Griggio, vol. 2, *La raccolta canonica delle Epistole* (Florence: L.S. Olschiki, 1999), 3-18. The letter is undated. Given the date of Guarino's letter to Perondolo and the time of the controversy it was likely also written in 1416. Gravelle notes that Bruni praised Barbaro's letter and wrote to Guarino for a copy of da Monachi's comments so he

erudite men ought to value Greek studies, “since they always held the greatest influence among the wisest of our ancestors.”⁹⁰ Erudition was contingent upon knowledge of Greek.⁹¹ Like Guarino, he argues that classical Romans were well-versed in Greek and considered it a fundamental part of education.⁹² These men “watered their gardens with the rivers of the Greeks.”⁹³ Barbaro offers as evidence Cicero’s estimation of Greek learning in his otherwise decidedly anti-Greek defense of Flaccus: “I do not deny the charms of their speech, the keenness of their intellects. Finally, I do not deny to them any

too could compose a response. Leonardo Bruni to Guarino of Verona, Florence, in *Leonardi Bruni Arretini Epistolarum libri VIII*, ed. Lorenzo Mehus (Florence: 1741), 4:125-126. Bruni’s request is another indication of how texts circulated among humanists, passed hand to hand among friends, and how literary controversies spread and were sustained. See note 35.

⁹⁰ Francesco Barbaro to Lorenzo da Monachi, Venice, in *Epistolario*, ed. Claudio Griggio, 6. Quod tametsi adeo perspicuum sit, ut in contrarium neminem verbum esse facturum existimem, nisi qui contentiosus ac indoctus quam gravis et eruditus haberi malit, tamen de utroque dicam et de litteris grecis prius, que magnum apud eruditos homines pondus habere debent, cum apud sapientissimos viros maiores nostros maximum semper habuerint.

⁹¹ Ibid., 6. Et ut reliquas nationes in presentia missas faciam, in omnibus enim gentibus greca hec litteratura singulari in admiratione fuit, apud Latinos tantum habuit auctoritatis eo tempore quo grecis in philosophia litteris Romanos non eguisse a Cicerone scriptum est, ut quisquis eruditionem huius sermonis non calleret sine ulla dubitatione indoctus haberetur; Ibid., 10-11. Quid plura? Nisi me fallit animus, facile perspicuemus neminem qui de his litterature partibus cum ingenio et industria versatus sit, a nobis nisi per tenebras intelligi posse, si grecarum litterarum lumen non accesserit; Ibid., 11. si denique ipsi rei que valet plurimum et commoditati atque necessitati studiorum nostrorum credere voluerimus, certo nobis persuadebimus grecas litteras cum latinis habere strictissimum et necessarium quoddam vinculum et tanto nobis usui ac honori esse posse, ut nemo sine hoc instrumento in ullis illustrioribus artibus satis instructus, satis ornatus habendus sit.

⁹² Ibid., 7-8. Quid in singulis moror? Omnes qui in ampla laude nati, in amplissima vixerunt, ita grecis litteris ornatos fuisse legimus, ut non modo que in illis continentur cognovisse constet, sed etiam verba et versus memoria tenuisse manifestum sit. Sic Cesaes consulares triumphales pretorios senatorios patritios equites et reliquos qui ullo numero essent, ex tempore aliquid homericum aut sophocleum et aliorum exprompsisse et eleganter multa grece scripsisse proditum est. Quid Catones Scipiones Emilios Brutos Servilios Scevolas Pomponios Marcellos Hortensios Metellos et reliqua superioris etatis lumina commemorem? Mitto Aulum Albinum Asinium Pollionem Cor. Nepotem qui latinis historias grece scriptas reliquerunt, cum exiguis finibus, quibus latinitas ipsa continetur, contenti non fuissent. Quid posteriores Plinius Suetonius Tacitus Spurinnas Lactantius Cyprianos Florios Servios Favorinos Gellios et innumerales alios?; Ibid., 8. Quamobrem si diligenter ea que litterarum monumentis tradita sunt attendere voluerimus, neminem inveniemus qui doctis illis temporibus eruditus habitus sit qui in his litteris, de quibus in presentiarum verba facimus, non iecerit fundamenta doctrine sue.

⁹³ Ibid., 11. Que tametsi minus ingenii minus admirationis minus dignitatis habeat, ut copiosissime a te demonstratum est, quam si iisdem de rebus, exemplo maiorum qui ex fluminibus grecorum hortulos suos irrigabant...

other claims.”⁹⁴ Barbaro considers it important that even Cicero, the “keenest defender of the Latin name,” acknowledges the impressiveness of Greek learning. Quintilian, he continues, wanted his ideal orator educated in Greek letters. Like Guarino, he offers Horace and Virgil as additional evidence.⁹⁵ Barbaro adds that Roman authors were praised for modeling their work on that of the Greeks. He cites the *Antiope* of Pacuvius and the *Medea* of Ennius (both modeled on Euripides) and the works of Terence as examples.⁹⁶ Barbaro and Guarino thus articulate similar arguments about the utility and classical Roman praise of Greek literature.

Trebizond had already voiced many of these same ideas years before responding to the Agaso letter in 1437. His *Oratio de laudibus Ciceronis*, delivered in Venice in 1421, emphasizes Greek learning in his narrative of Cicero’s life and discusses Cicero’s education under Philo, his studies of Plato, and his study of philosophy in Athens.⁹⁷

⁹⁴ Ibid., 6-7. Quamobrem, quia non modo studia hec humanitatis apud Grecos, sed ab ipsis ad ceteros homines pervenisse putaverunt, ipse M.T. Cicero, qui ut latini nominis patronus acerrimus, sic greci iudex parum equus creditus est, tribuit Grecis litteras, dat multarum artium disciplinam, “non adimit sermonis leporem, ingeniorum acumen. Deinde etiam alia quecumque sibi sumunt non repugnat”... Cf. to Cic., *Flac.*, 9. See note 31.

⁹⁵ Francesco Barbaro to Lorenzo da Monachi, Venice, in *Epistolario*, ed. Claudio Griggio, 9-10. Quintilianus etiam, eruditissimus ac diligentissimus scriptor, cum ab incunabulis oratorem instituit, in primis sibi grecas litteras proposuit, a quibus nostre fluxerunt, ut facile intelligi posset quantum ornamenti et adiumenti afferant oratori, cum ad collocandum et stabiliendum fundamenta laudis oratorie principem sibi locum resignaverit. Quid Oratius familiaris tuus velit, iam me intelligis: “vos exemplaria greca/nocturna versate manu, versate diurna.” Quidni? “Grais ingenium, Grais dedit ore rotundo/Musa loqui.” Virgilius noster preterea, qui etiam post illam etatem fuit qua, ut tu vis, philosophia et omnes bone artes illustrate latinis litteris erant ut grecis studiis Romanis opus non esset; quid Maro sentiat clara voce testatur: ‘Excudent alii spirantia mollius era...’

⁹⁶ Ibid., 12. Quis enim vel eo tempore fuit quo in homine romano etiam satis pauce littere multe putabantur, qui Ennii *Medeam* aut *Antiopam* Pacuvii sperneret atque reiceret? Quis etiam posteaquam greca magis familiaria Latinis fuerunt quam ipsa latina nostris hominibus nunc sunt, quis, inquam, easdem fabulas latinas ad verbum ex Eurypede expressas non legerit et auctores non laudaverit? Quem mihi dabis, qui ea que Terentius ex Menandro et Plautus et Cecilius ex veteribus comicis in latinum verbis electis graviter et ornate convertit non admiretur et eos multa cum venustate et omni sale interpretum munere functos esse non asseveret?

⁹⁷ *Collectanea*, 345. (7) Liberalibus ergo studiis se sub Philone illo Rome exercuit, quem ex genere constat <H>ebreorum fuisse et ad tantum philosophie pervenisse ut solus alter Plato appellari meruerit, cuius

Trebizond tells his audience that when Cicero returned to Rome he vowed to bring Greek eloquence with him. This marked an important transition in the Republic whereby Roman glory came to be won by eloquence rather than arms. Trebizond articulates the idea that learning flows from Greece, a position both Guarino and Barbaro had argued. He links Greek studies with knowledge of the most important topics, a position that Quattrocento advocates of Greek studies voiced.⁹⁸ He revisits these positions to defend himself from Agaso's anti-Greek attacks in 1437.

Like his contemporaries, Trebizond defended the importance of Greece by arguing for the value of Greek learning to all studies. Trebizond's most adamant and explicit defense of Greek learning in his *Responsio* to Guarino occurs at the conclusion. Greece, he explains, is the "inventor of all the good arts" and "more than other regions, produces men better in all things."⁹⁹ He argues here for the utility and primacy of Greek in the same way as Guarino and Barbaro linked Greek studies to Latin and in the same way as Battista Guarino described how Latin studies flow from Greek.

quidem egregia opera in omni disciplinarum genere adhuc apud Grecos multis magnisque voluminibus explicata feruntur. Hoc ille doctore et ingenio acutissimo ad philosophie brevi speculationes erectus, statuit militarem quoque doctrinam eo magis complecti quo arma litteris, litteras autem armis facilius decorasset... Athenas autem profectus, tantum opere philosophie dedit ut eam iam merito profiteri posset. In qua persistere cogitabat perpetuo nisi redire et capescere rempublicam crebris amici cogerent litteris.

⁹⁸ Ibid., 345. (8) Eloquentiam enim, maximam Grecie laudem, in Italiam eum traducere affirmavit, cum iam Romani militaris rei gloriam transtulissent. (9) Sed quid omnium singulatim eum dixi laudes superasse cum ipsius populi Romani tot annis comparatam armis gloriam antecelluerit? Nam populus Romanus ab urbe condita gravissimis bellis perfectis in potentissimis populis illustrissimisque subactis regibus continua exercitatione armorum post multos annos tandem rei militaris palmam a Grecis accepisse videbatur; Tullius brevi, imo minimo, temporis momento (sic enim, si comparare voluerimus, ferme videbitur) eloquentiam, que rerum omnium scientiam comprehendit, et ipsius Academie gloriam et dignitatem ab Grecia in Italiam Apollonii, Greci hominis, traduxit iudicio. Cf. Plut., *Cic.* 4.3-5.

⁹⁹ *Collectanea*, 406. (107) Verum huc loci factus, non possum non dolere quod in Greciam homo tu omnium, in Greciam, omnium bonarum artium inventricem.... inveheris; Ibid., 407. (109) O patria, patria, ostendes profecto, si unquam liberaberis, quanto ceteris tu regionibus meliores omnibus rebus viros procrees.

These were common arguments for other Byzantines as well. In his 1449 address inaugurating Greek studies at Ferrara, Theodore Gaza claimed that Latin studies began to decline when people abandoned the study of Greek.¹⁰⁰ In an oration inaugurating Greek studies at the University of Padua in 1463/4, Demetrius Chalcondyles stated that “no one is ignorant that the Latins received every kind of the liberal arts from the Greeks” and added that because of this “the study of Greek letters offers much fruit to the Latins in every kind of learning.”¹⁰¹ In the 1460s, Andronicus Contoblacas, a prominent member of Cardinal Bessarion’s circle of Byzantine scholars, similarly identified Greeks as the “inventors of all the good arts.”¹⁰² Like his Italian and Byzantine contemporaries, Trebizond appeals to classical Roman authorities—including Horace and Vergil—to

¹⁰⁰ Theodore Gaza, *Oratio de Litteris Graecis* in *Aus Bessarions Gelehrtenkreis*, by Ludwig Mohler (Paderborn: Schöningh, 1942), 254. Non enim Romanis Graecae litterae alienae erant a quibus fere omnia latinae litteraturae ac disciplinae non modo carptim accepta, verum et plerumque ordine translata videntur... Hunc tamen tam frequentem litterarum graecarum usum fortuna primum, quae mutationibus rerum gaudet, prohibere ac paulatim auferre coepit, hominum deinde negligentia accedens penitus delevit... Etenim tamdiu graecae litterae in Italia sunt conservatae, quamdiu in ea latina elegantia viguit. Cum vero haec deseri coepit, litterae quoque graecae simul neglectae sunt, amboque praeclara haec studia multos iam per annos tamquam duo clarissima lumina sunt extincta.

The address was “the earliest surviving inaugural discourse on the importance of Greek studies given by a Byzantine émigré scholar in Italy.” See Deno Geanakoplos, *Constantinople and the West: Essays on the Byzantine (Palaeologan) and Italian Renaissance and the Byzantine and Roman Churches* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1989), 73-74 and Gravelle, 276-277.

¹⁰¹ Geanakoplos provides the Latin from the sole extant manuscript. Geanakoplos, “Demetrius,” 132 n. 42. MS. fs. 3v-4r: Nemini credo vestrum esse ignotum omne genus liberalium artium a grecis latinos accepisse et cum auctores omnium istarum arcium grecos et ipsa nomina artibus indicta greca fuisse constat... Cum itaque et studia litterarum et omnes artes ab eis accepissent auctoresque ipsos sequuntur, nemo inficias ibit, quin studia litterarum grecarum plurimum fructus latinis in omni genere doctrine afferant.

Chalcondyles also describes how classical Romans venerated Greek literature. Ibid., 133 n. 48. MS. f. 4v: Quorum nullum ignarum litterarum grecarum fuisse constat. Quin complures eorum adeo bene pleneque eas venerasse, ut dubium esset an litteras grecas vel latinas melius scirent.

¹⁰² Peter Bravus criticizes Contoblacas for doing so. Petrus Bravus Veronensis, *Invectiva in Andronicum Callistum*, in Hankins, “Renaissance Crusaders,” 203-204. I cite the text with the author’s name and the line numbers provided by Hankins. Bravus, 31-33. Nunc inter rosas ac lilia iocaris; audes preterea Graecos religionis excultores ac bonarum artium et omnium inuentores appellare.

Monfasani has since corrected Hankins, who originally identified Andronicus Callistus as the object of Bravus’ invective. Monfasani, “The Pro-Latin Apologetics,” 182. Hankins offers the invective as an example of prejudice against Byzantine émigrés and provides the tentative date.

assert that it is by “the authority of the [Greek] ancients” that the “spirit of Greece is strong.”¹⁰³

This latter argument illustrates how Trebizond defends Greeks by citing the Latinists’ own authorities against them. This is also how he responds to Agaso’s contention that Cicero warned Quintus against association with Greeks, and is a sign that Trebizond struggled with characterizations of Greek vice. He circumvents these characterizations, as Cicero did, by drawing a distinction between past and present Greeks. Trebizond notes that even in warning Quintus that many Greeks “are deceitful [*fallaces*] and unreliable [*leves*],” Cicero “at the same time excuses them” explaining they had been “trained by a long course of servitude to show an excess of sycophancy.”¹⁰⁴ Trebizond’s interpretation of the passage maintains an idyllic ancient Greece “by whose strengths the spirit of Greece is strong.” This passage was not the only time Cicero had questioned contemporary Greek morality even while distinguishing it from the heritage of ancient Greece. His praise of ancient Athens in the *Pro Flacco*, discussed above, is an example. In that speech, Cicero also argues “This later Greece has long been troubled and

¹⁰³ *Collectanea*, 406. (108) Neque advertis quid a Cicerone in testimonium assumis. “Diuturna,” inquit “servitute ad nimiam assentationem eruditi.” Aderas cum hec transcriberes? Corpore scio; animo sentio te oppressum vi. Sed quid oportet conviciari cum multa tibi huiusmodi dicta imprudenter comperiantur? Accusat Cicero Grecos et excusat simul. Nam diuturna servitus maxima vitia parit; proxima, paupertas; que duo fortune incommoda maxime animum deiciunt, ingenii vires deprimunt, totum hominem simul semper oppugnant, sepe expugnant ea diuturna durioraque; modo cum sint, vastarunt Greciam. Quare non a presenti fortuna, verum veterum auctoritate quibus animi viribus polleat Grecia querere debuisti. “Grecis,” quidam ait, “ingenium Grecis dedit musa rotundo ore loqui.” Et poeta maximus omniumque prestantissimus: “excudent alii spirantia, melius era, credo, equidem vivos ducent de marmore vultus, orabunt causas melius.” Cf. Hor., *Ars. P.* 323 and Verg., *Aen.* 6.847-849. Trebizond’s quotation of the *Aeneid* differs from the original line, which reads “excudent alii spirantia mollius aera (credo equidem)...” See the substitution of *melius* for *mollius*, which Monfasani notes in his apparatus, and that Trebizond does not retain the diphthong in *aera*.

¹⁰⁴ See previous note, “Accusat Cicero...vastarunt Greciam.” Cf. Cic., *Q. Fr.* 1.16. The translation is Williams’, though I have translated *leves* as “unreliable” as it better represents the context of the passage as a warning against close intimacies with people who are naturally untrustworthy. Cicero, *Epistulae ad Quintum Fratrem*, in *Cicero: Letters to Quintus, Brutus, and Others*, trans. W. Glynn Williams (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1972). See note 49.

vexed by its own devices,” while “that older Greece, which once was so notable for its resources, its powers, its glory, fell because of...the undue freedom and irresponsibility of its assemblies.”¹⁰⁵ In each case, Cicero emphasizes the degradation of Greek culture over time. It is a narrative that fixes firmly in the past a Greek culture that can still contribute to contemporary concerns.

Trebizond’s appeal to the degradation model—perplexing at first since he was not himself an ancient Greek—can be read as an attempt to depict himself as a “good” rather than a “bad” Greek. Even in lamenting Greek *levitas*, Cicero did admit the existence of learned and honorable “contemporary” Greeks.¹⁰⁶ Trebizond’s contemporaries also articulated that position. At the end of his scathing letter against Contoblacas, Peter Bravus noted that his anti-Greek invective was not directed “against all Greeks (for I believe some good men can be found among them), but against the shameful and those like you [Contoblacas].”¹⁰⁷ Trebizond, as has been discussed, went to great lengths to deny Agaso’s accusations of arrogance and *levitas* and to prove himself a learned rhetorician. His efforts should be considered attempts to present himself as the exception, a “good” Greek. Trebizond’s use of the degradation model allows him to maintain the value of Greek studies and turn Agaso’s appeal to Cicero against Guarino.

Trebizond’s application of the model also works because he exploits the ambiguity in Agaso’s letter and at times actively misrepresents portions of it. An example of the latter is when he chides Agaso for claiming “the most shameful thing of all is to

¹⁰⁵ Cic., *Flac.* 16-17 and 62. For the earlier discussion of the degradation model see pages 37-38.

¹⁰⁶ See pages 36-37.

¹⁰⁷ Bravus, 60-64. Finem igitur scribendi faciam, si te prius hoc unum monuero, ut, etsi pro summa tua impudentia ne nimia quidem Latinorum latratus tuos maledicos, non propria illis, existimandum effugere uoluisti, hoc modestiae meae tribuas, quod verba mea non in omnes Graecorum (credo enim ex eis nonnullos reperiri bonos), sed in flagiciosos et tui similes fecisse uelim.

receive a method of speaking in Latin from a Greek man.” Agaso had in fact written that it was both absurd and shameful “to receive instruction in speaking Latin from a Greek” who hardly knows how to speak Greek, much less Latin.¹⁰⁸ Trebizond essentially changes the terms of the dispute by interpreting Agaso’s statement not as an attack against a specific individual but as an attack against Greeks in general. Agaso’s ambiguous language leaves open the possibility that he intends to offer a blanket indictment of Greeks. That ambiguity allows Trebizond to characterize Agaso’s attacks as generally anti-Greek rather than specifically anti-Trebizond, and to accuse Agaso of inconsistency. “Agaso,” Trebizond explains, “scornfully refuses to learn from the Greeks” and yet argues that the *RLV* is inconsequential because a number of Greek authorities already sustain the study of eloquence. “If you read and approve Greek authors,” Trebizond asks, “why do you disparage me as a Greek?” He casts himself here alongside ancient Greeks who made valuable contributions to rhetoric. He even anticipates Guarino’s retort—that those men were learned whereas Trebizond himself is not—only to counter that if Guarino wants to claim Trebizond is unlearned he needs to prove it. Unlike the more general defense of Greek learning at the conclusion of the letter, this section is an explicit defense of Trebizond’s own credibility as a Greek scholar. It makes clear that, in addition to defending his Latinity, his defense of his Greek learning functions as a second way to justify his scholarly contributions.

¹⁰⁸ *Collectanea*, 383. (8) Primum omnium turpissimum esse Latinis a Greco ais homine rationem dicendi accipere. Deinde tui oblitus, non multo post subdis non fuisse mihi deplorandum si multi maioribus editi de disceptandi ratione codices amissi negligentia sunt quoniam Aristotelem, Isocratem, Hermogenem, Demosthenemque habeamus. O vere Agasonem, qui, cum a Grecis discere dedignetur, ad Grecos confugiat, claraque voce predicare non erubescat dedecori esse Latinis si quicquam ex Greco audiant cum habeant unde discant plerosque Grece auctores! Nonne pro scriptis rectius nostris id dici videtur? Nam si Grecos legis et probas, cur me quasi Grecum contemnis? Si Georgium, quoniam Grecus est, spernis, cur Aristotelem, Isocratem, Hermogenem, Demosthenem Latinis legendos illico subiungis? Sed illi docti fuerunt, inquires, tu rudis. Illud ergo tibi tacendum fuerat; hoc comprobandum. Cf. Agaso’s comments, *ibid.*, 365. See notes 36 and 60 above.

A Classical Alternative

If Trebizond's defense of his Latinity was one strategy for countering Agaso's anti-Greek attacks and his defense of Greek learning marks a second, his attempt to place Greek on the same level as Latin marks a third. Agaso's attacks, as has been discussed, are based on an assumption regarding Latinity as the measure of true eloquence. At times, when he was not fervently defending his Latinity, Trebizond actually privileges Greek over Latin. On more than one occasion he chides Guarino's shortcomings in Greek. The first instance occurs as Trebizond discusses his early education in Italy. Guarino was reading Pindar at the time, Trebizond recalls, and asked the young Cretan about Greek meter. He was so pleased with Trebizond's ability to speak on the subject, for a period of two days no less, that he asked Trebizond to write down his thoughts because he "could not remember so many and such great ideas."¹⁰⁹ The second instance occurs later when Trebizond returns to a consideration of Greek poetry and admonishes Guarino for daring to say that Greeks—including Trebizond—know little. He issues a challenge in response: "If you form one [Latin] word from any Greek poet, I will acknowledge you are not completely unacquainted with Greek!" To emphasize the point, Trebizond recalls another conversation he had had with Guarino, again during his early years in Italy, about the Greeks and poetic license, word choice, and meter. Here, as in their discussion of Pindar, Trebizond had proven himself to be the more knowledgeable man.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁹ *Collectanea*, 398. (72) Quo quidem tempore memini tibi Pindarum legenti ac a me petenti quidnam aut de illo poeta aut de metris suis sentirem, biduo me de metrorum omnium genere disseruisse, teque subinde flagitasse ut siquid haberem de his rebus, scriptis traderem quoniam tot tantaque memoria tenere non possem. Fecimus et obtulimus. See note 80 for the preceding text.

¹¹⁰ *Collectanea*, 406. (105) Et tu Grecos homines Greca, in quibus nati, in quibus educati sumus, quibus etiam Latina illustravimus, parum scire audes dicere? Qui si unum verbum ex aliquo Greco poeta flexeris, fatebor te Greca non omnino ignorare! (106) Num venit tibi in mentem primis illis annis cum e Grecia venissem ac de poetica licentia sermo haberetur, asserentem te maximam habere Grecorum poetarum

Trebizond does more than merely point out Guarino's shortcomings; he builds an alternate model of erudition based on knowledge of both Latin and Greek. It is the combination of both, he asserts, that makes him so formidable. To Guarino, he writes: "The copiousness of my speech is such that I do not fear you; the flood of my genius is such that I think little of you; this erudition in Greek as much as Latin is such that I can criticize you easily." It is the breadth of his education, he continues, that will allow him, like a knight, to topple Guarino.¹¹¹ Unlike his later boast proclaiming that his Latin eloquence is suited to Cicero's Rome, Trebizond describes here the importance of both languages. The argument was surely familiar to Guarino, who argued similarly in response to da Monachi. Trebizond wields this standard of erudition against Guarino. At times, he yields a measure of Greek learning to the other man. Trebizond cites the "Greek manner of speech" in the Agaso letter as evidence of Guarino's authorship, since "there is no one besides yourself who, learned in both languages, is a bit angry with me."¹¹² He later explains Guarino's reputation as a function of the Italian's Greek education, arguing "if you had not been instructed by Greeks, you would have languished in the dark." Even so, Trebizond's characterization of Guarino's shortcomings in Greek allows him to argue

licentiam quod omnia verba metri causa, ut vellent, commutarent, increpatum fuisse a me modestius quoniam rarissime poete nostri ea re quicquam permutent, sed linquarum esse rationem, quas, cum esse quinque constet, in unum confundere omnes liceat, ut Homerus precipue facit, <et> quod ipsis non muniatur rarissime inveniri?

¹¹¹ Ibid., 382. (7) Nam, Guarine, nec enim molestum cuiquam futurum puto, quod multi preclarique viri natura ipsa duce fecerunt, si ad meam defensionem me laudavero, presertim cum tu in persequendo id facias. Ea mihi orationis copia est ut te non pertimescam; id ingenii flumen ut contemnam; ea tam Greca, quam Latina eruditio ut te facile possim exagitare; ea denique maiorum rerum doctrina ut, ne grande quid dicam, tanquam catafractus eques, insidentem te asino non hasta, sed solo afflatu currendi precipitem valeam deturbare.

¹¹² Ibid., 382. (4) Quasobres, Guarine...si statim ex inscriptione Grecum sermonem ostentasti, nec mihi utraque lingua doctus preter te subiratus est quispiam, et horum omnium uno aut altero posses argumento deprehendi, cum hec inter se mirifice sibi cuncta convenient, multaque alia, que nunc enumerare longum esset, concurrant, audebis te illum non esse Agasonem qui hec ediderit impudenter asserere?

that he had surpassed the man by virtue of his skill in both languages.¹¹³ Not only does Trebizond contend that he is a skilled Latinist—contrary to Agaso’s accusations—but that he is a stronger Latinist, better educated and more eloquent, than Guarino is a student of Greek. It is a remarkably bold claim levied against one of a small number of men—alongside Francesco Filelfo and Leonardo Bruni—renowned for their skill in both Greek and Latin.

On the whole, Trebizond’s defense of Greek and his arguments in favor of a combined knowledge of Greek and Latin are difficult to reconcile with those sections in which he so adamantly defends his Latinity. Given Trebizond’s clear struggles with Agaso’s anti-Greek attacks, the inconsistency in his response can be read as a result of the pressure that Greek stereotypes imposed. As a Greek, Trebizond felt the greatest amount of pressure to prove his Latinity and so that is where most of his effort went. This explains some of the inner conflict in his response but not all of it. His contemporaries—including Guarino—had provided him a blueprint, based on classical Roman arguments on the need to study both Greek and Latin, with which he might defend himself. Trebizond, however, so overcompensates in his defense of his Latinity that his arguments about Greek studies are overshadowed. The irony is that Guarino and Barbaro ultimately make Trebizond’s argument better than he does. It is interesting to think—albeit counterfactual and ahistorical—that Guarino may have constructed a stouter defense of Trebizond against Agaso than Trebizond himself did.

¹¹³ Ibid., 406. (107) in Greciam, inquam, unus omnium, quo te inscribis nomine dignissimus, in Greciam inveheris. Atqui si de aliquo Italo bene merita est Grecia, de te certe optime est, qui, nisi a Grecis institutus fuisses, in tenebris iacuisses. Levitatem, fallaciam integer tu homo Grecie increpas?

The Immoral Greek

This analysis began by identifying Agaso's two main strategies of attack: against Trebizond's Latinity and against his moral character. The two, of course, are not mutually exclusive. We have already seen how Agaso employs both in characterizing Trebizond as not only *ineptus* and *loquax* but also as *arrogans*.¹¹⁴ His descriptions of Trebizond's conduct are, however, a more integral part of his attacks than has so far been discussed. Agaso casts Trebizond as obstinate, untrustworthy, disloyal, and immodest, all of which contribute to his portrayal of Greek *levitas* and serve as key concepts in the dispute. The contrast between Roman *gravitas* on the one hand and Greek *levitas* on the other undergirds significant portions of Agaso's letter. Trebizond addresses this contrast in his response to Guarino by means of the same attendant moral concepts, including honesty, fidelity, piety, and loyalty. For both Agaso and Trebizond, questions of moral rectitude, like questions of learning, were of paramount importance for humanists, particularly given their role as educators.

The Immoral Student

Perhaps the clearest example of Agaso's contrast between *gravitas* and *levitas* is his accusation that Trebizond had mistreated Guarino. Agaso gives the topic ample consideration and casts him as an immoral Greekling—treacherous, dishonest, and shameless—in contrast to the morally upright Guarino. His argument is predicated on the premise that Trebizond “first formed an understanding of the Latin language, with Guarino instructing him.” Despite Guarino's efforts, time that Agaso explains Guarino spent in vain on an ungrateful student, Trebizond slandered him in the *RLV*. That Agaso

¹¹⁴ See page 39 and Agaso's description of Trebizond as “stupid and impertinent, and without honor.”

considers these attacks a function of the author's Greekness is implied by a reference to Paul calling Cretans liars and beasts, made in the context of a comment about "the men of this island and their character."¹¹⁵ Agaso proceeds to detail Trebizond's dishonorable actions including how he attacked Guarino without provocation or warning. He accuses Trebizond of pursuing an unknowing Guarino with his traps.¹¹⁶ Agaso describes him as an impetuous and rash reviler who uses slanderous language.¹¹⁷ "In the manner of a deceitful brigand," he "ambushes his instructor unawares...with slanderous speech." Agaso emphasizes that Guarino knew nothing of these attacks and in fact continued to commend the other man.¹¹⁸ He thus contrasts Guarino's innate modesty, "by which he is accustomed to make light of revilers as he makes light of asses," with "this Greekling's" obstinacy, slander, and temerity.¹¹⁹ He also faults Trebizond with a failure to apologize for his insults, to recant them, and to admit his wrongs, "since the greater evidence of a good man is to prevent oneself from error rather than persist in it, and the path to good

¹¹⁵ *Collectanea*, 368. (20) Hic idem est qui Latine lingue primum, Guarino docente cognitionem imbibit, in quo erudiendo oleum, ut dicitur, perdidit et impensam. Nam inania sunt beneficia que mortuo pariter et ingrato conferuntur. For the reference to Paul, see note 48.

¹¹⁶ *Collectanea*, 370. (30) "Que si ab illo aut discendi aut docendi gratia dicebantur, cur non Guarino potius denuntiabat quam ignarum insidiis insectabatur, presertim ne verbo quidem lacessitus ab eo, nisi quod se ab illo cultum honoratumque noverat?"

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 371. (34) "Cum igitur orationis eius initium tam acute, tam artificiose, ut studiosis videre licet, contextum sit (est enim, ni fallor, iambici metri ratione inchoatum), impetuosus conviciator ac temerarius irrui et, modo maledicam exerceat linguam, nihil quod dicat, advertit."

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 371-372. (36) "Plura refellenda restabant, viri patricii, que Guarino remittenda sunt. Namque ut ea rescierit, suam rem, si mihi audierit, suo, ut dicitur, marte decernet. Is enim, horum ignarus omnium, Trapezuntium commendare non desinit, ab quo et laudes expectare debuit, cum interim insidiosi more latronis Trapezuntius suum preceptorem, suum, inquam, preceptorem excipit incautum et maledictis insectatur."

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 372. (38) Tu vero Guarinum pro tua in eum fide et consuetudine hortare, immo urge, incende, anima ut huius Trapezuntii contumaciam confutet et discipulum preceptoris auctoritate castiget ne pro innata sibi modestia, qua velut asinos solet conviciatores parvi facere, tam honoris et fame negligens, huic ipsi Greculo maledicentiam, temeritatem, contumaciam sinat increscere quod studiorum non mediocre dedecus avertendum est.

mores is never too late.” He suggests Trebizond could recant “his wicked lies” easily in a short letter.¹²⁰ It is for this reason that he solicits aid in leading Trebizond to “repair his mores” and “restore that student, ungrateful to his instructor, to observable gratitude, by which he may acquire for himself glory and praise.”¹²¹

Agaso’s arguments are based on an assumption that as a student of Guarino’s, Trebizond is especially indebted to him. He is very clear that Guarino had a right to expect his student to praise and honor him.¹²² The instructor-student relationship was much valued in classical and early modern pedagogy, a reality that informs Agaso’s attacks. Quintilian, for instance, argues that since an instructor must inculcate morals as well as knowledge, it is crucial that he has an “impeccable character” by which he can “preserve the young pupils from injury” and “deter the more aggressive from licentious behavior.”¹²³ This only works if the student loves and respects his teacher and is willing to listen to his lessons and imitate his character. “Better nourishment,” Quintilian explains, “comes...from a teacher whom, if they are properly taught, the pupils love and respect. It is difficult to overestimate how much readier we are to imitate those whom we

¹²⁰ Agaso writes that he suggested this in response to the patrician’s story which alleged Trebizond had publicly slandered Guarino. For the patrician’s story, see note 69. *Collectanea*, 369. (23) “Cur,” inquam, “Trapezuntius probra non retractat cum maius viri boni argumentum sit sese ab errato detertere quam in errato perstare, et nunquam sera sit ad bonos mores via?” “Verecundia,” inquit, “impedimento est et, cum tot exscripta sint sue Rhetoric volumina, emendandi labor.” “Alia quaedam via restat,” dixi, “ut parvam per epistolam impia revocet mendacia, que in ipsum tandem conviciatorem retundentur.”

¹²¹ Ibid., 371. (33) “Quod si tanta Trapezuntium cura sollicitat ut inepta coaptare, turbata disponere, male posita struere conetur, queso ut discordem totamque sub arma coactam componat Italiam. Que si maiora viribus abnuat, hominem rogate, viri patricii, ut portus vestri latiore reddat alveum et ituris rediturisque navibus utiliora concinnet hostia. Quod si rursum maius humeris opus respuet, suos concinnet mores et obliquam linguam dirrigat et ingratum sese preceptoris discipulum gratum observantemque formet ac reficiat, que sibi decus laudemque parient.”

¹²² Ibid., 371-372. (36) Trapezuntium commendare non desinit... . See note 118.

¹²³ The translations are Russell’s. Quintilian, *Institutio oratoria*, ed. and trans. Donald A. Russell (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001), 2.2.3-4. Nam et adulti fere pueri ad hos praeceptores transferuntur et apud eos iuvenes etiam facti perseverant, ideoque maior adhibenda tum cura est ut et teneriores annos ab iniuria sanctitas docentis custodiat et ferociores a licentia gravitas deterreat.

like.”¹²⁴ To that end, he exhorts the instructor to “adopt a paternal attitude towards his pupils, and regard himself as taking the place of those whose children are entrusted to him.”¹²⁵ The bond between instructor and student had to be sufficiently close, like that between parent and child, to create the best possible educational environment.

The classical ideal that an instructor should function *in loco parentis* was well established in fifteenth-century pedagogy. Writing in 1450, Aeneas Silvius Piccolomini—the future Pope Pius II—echoes Quintilian in arguing that instructors should lead their students to a moral life “with teachings in keeping with a praiseworthy life and with admonitions from which the shoots of the most correct morals will germinate.”¹²⁶ The goal, he explains, is to “incite [youths] to virtuous deeds” and “restrain them from disgraceful behavior.”¹²⁷ “If you [the student] wish to act rightly,” he contends “you should love them [instructors] not less than your studies themselves, and you will consider them as parents, not of your body, but of your mind.” He emphasizes the point by citing Juvenal: “May fragrant saffrons and perpetual spring bloom over the ashes of those who deemed that a teacher should hold the place of a revered parent.”¹²⁸

¹²⁴ Quint., *Inst.* 2.2.8. tamen viva illa, ut dicitur, vox alit plenius, praecipueque praeceptoris quem discipuli, si modo recte sunt instituti, et amant et verentur. Vix autem dici potest quanto libentius imitemur eos quibus favemus.

¹²⁵ Quint., *Inst.* 2.2.4-5. Sumat igitur ante omnia parentis erga discipulos suos animum, ac succedere se in eorum locum a quibus sibi liberi tradantur existimet.

¹²⁶ Aeneas Silvius Piccolomini, *De liberorum educatione*, in *Humanist Educational Treatises*, ed. Kallendorf, 10. Horum officum est, ut sicut coloni suis arbusculis circumponunt saepes, sic tibi consona laudabilis vitae instituta admonitionesque circumferant, unde rectissima morum germina pullulent, honestatis enim fons atque radix est legitima disciplina.

¹²⁷ Ibid., 10. Nobilibus pueris et maxime regibus maiorum laudes ac vituperia quam verbera commoditatem magis afferunt. Illae ad honesta concitant, haec a turpitudine cohibent; in utrisque tamen adhibendus est modus, ne quid nimis sit.

¹²⁸ Ibid., 10. Discenti autem nihil magis adversum est, quam praeceptores odisse, quos tu, si recte facere volueris, non minus amabis quam ipsa studia, et parentes esse, non quidem corporis sed mentis tuae iudicabis. Multum haec pietas studio confert. Audi rursus Iuvenalem: dii maiorum umbris tenuem et sine

Battista Guarino argues similarly: “Let us not think our ancestors were rash when they deemed that a teacher should stand in the place of a venerated parent.” In this way “a teacher would instruct his pupils with greater care and good will, and his pupils would respect his words reverently as though they flowed from paternal affection.” The opposite also holds true, “if they scorn him [their instructor], they will also necessarily scorn his teaching.” He cites Plutarch’s example of Alexander the Great, “who used to declare that he owed no less to his teacher Aristotle than to Philip his father, because from the latter he had only received life, but from the former he had received the good life.”¹²⁹ Agaso too clearly embraces the notion of an instructor functioning *in loco parentis* according to the will of “our venerable ancestors.”¹³⁰ He, like Battista Guarino, offers the example of Alexander the Great to urge students to protect their instructors “like second parents.”¹³¹

Agaso not only chastises Trebizond’s treatment of Guarino, he provides a clear indication of the moral obligations a student owes his instructor by describing those

pondere terram spirantesque crocos et in urna perpetuum ver, qui praeceptorem sancti voluere parentis esse loco. Cf. Juv., 7.207-210.

¹²⁹ Battista Guarino, *De ordine docendi et studendi*, in *Humanist Educational Treatises*, ed. Kallendorf, 4. Deinde in praeceptore colendo paternam sibi constituent sanctitatem; nam si eum contempserint, eius quoque praeceptionem contemnunt necesse est. Neque enim existimandum est maiores illos temere praeceptorem sancti voluisse parentis esse loco; sed ut ille maiore cum diligentia benivolentiaque eos instrueret, ipsi autem venerabundi eius dicta velut a paterna quadam affectione manantia observanda esse crederent. Quocirca ea in re Alexandri magni exemplum imitabuntur, qui non minus se Aristoteli praeceptori quam Philippo patri debere praedicabat, propterea quod ab hoc esse tantum, ab illo et bene esse accepisset. Cf. Plut., *Alex.* 8.3.

¹³⁰ *Collectanea*, 370. (30) “Num censetis, inquam, viri patricii causas fuisse Trapezuntio quibus in eius praeceptorem invehetur, quem maiores nostri sancti voluere parentis esse loco?” See note 116 for the rest of the passage.

¹³¹ *Collectanea*, 372. (39) Vos etiam adolescentes et litterarie militiae tyrones, alacres in hunc invadendum insurgite. Ubinam melius dicendi artem, cui nunc insudetis, exercere potestis quam ut bonos probetis, malignos accusetis, et doctores vestros quasi secundos parentes, pro vestra pietate tutemini? Octavianum Augustum ante oculos proponite, qui Athenodorum magistrum non minus quam Octavium observare, collaudare, defensare visus est. Idem ab Alexandro Magno factitatum est, qui Aristotelis pietatem vel anteponeere vel equare Philippi caritati pre se tulit.

students of Guarino who show him the proper respect and affection. The discussion allows Agaso to cast in clearer terms Trebizond's lack of honor. This is most evident when Agaso relates the testimony of the unnamed patrician. Agaso recalls first the patrician's description of how quickly a crowd of Guarino's students and supporters, in the presence of Trebizond, spoke in defense of their instructor. "Retaining still the recent memory and teaching of Guarino with affection," they in turn proclaimed Guarino's prudence, his elegance, his *gravitas*, the sweetness and clarity of his speech and his eloquence."¹³² Agaso uses the patrician's testimony to imply that such behavior was to be expected of morally upright students. He argues this more explicitly when expressing surprise that "since so many of Guarino's students flourish" anybody could think Trebizond's insults against Guarino would go unchallenged. These students, he suggests, were obligated to respond to Trebizond's insults by returning like for like.¹³³ He reiterates his surprise later and wonders why "since so many upright citizens and youths are bound to Guarino by the bond of an instructor and by intimate affection nobody stands forth to restrain the reviler."¹³⁴ He then urges Paulus Regius—the letter's recipient, whom Agaso describes as a fellow student of Guarino's—"because of [his] faith in [Guarino] and friendship," to encourage Guarino to defend himself.¹³⁵

¹³² Ibid., 368-369. See note 69.

¹³³ *Collectanea*, 369. (24) "An quispiam existimet, cum tot etiam docti quidem viri auditores Guarini vigeant, hac impunita relicturos esse maledicta, quin par pari referant quod Trapezuntium remordeant?" This is part of Agaso's argument that Trebizond should write a letter recanting his lies. See pages 70-71.

¹³⁴ *Collectanea*, 372. (36) "Nec satis mirari queo, cum hac in urbe tot cives integerrimi, tot adolescentes Guarino litteraria necessitudine et intima caritate devincti sint, extare neminem qui conviciatorem reprimat, memorem, qui non vetat peccare cum possit, iubet."

¹³⁵ For the identity of Regius, see note 13 above. For Agaso's exhortation to Regius, see note 119.

As with the arguments regarding Latinity, Agaso's accusation that he is an immoral student forces Trebizond to defend himself against allegations of moral wrongdoing and *levitas*. He begins by rejecting the premise that Guarino provided him with any meaningful instruction in Latin: "You make yourself out to be my teacher, although...I received my Latin from Vittorino da Feltre."¹³⁶ Trebizond counters Agaso's claim that Guarino taught him upon his arrival in Italy by explaining that initial instruction "hardly lasted two months." During that time, he contends that he was "occupied in transcription, not in learning," adding "if a confused examination of the most basic topics can even be called instruction."¹³⁷ Trebizond continues to belittle Guarino's instruction as "some of the basic lessons which are usually given by women rather than men."¹³⁸ On the other hand, Trebizond praises himself for learning Latin in spite of this poor instruction and argues he learned nothing from Guarino, whom he describes as unskilled.¹³⁹ These insults regarding Guarino's lessons are likely indicative of the growing Quattrocento tendency to consider the teaching of grammar a less prestigious career, particularly compared to the

¹³⁶ *Collectanea*, 397. (67) Preceptorem enim te meum fingis, cum ego Greca a meis, Latina a Victorino Feltrensi acceperim.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, 398. See note 80. (72) Vix duorum mensium...confusa cognitio.

¹³⁸ *Collectanea*, 398. (73) Videntur hec magna, preceptor, que abste accepimus? Communissima quedam, que femine magis quam viri monstrare solent, tradidisti. Oleum ac impensam amisisse quereris. Ego (ita me deus amet) pluris unicum ex his verbum que tibi de metris subieci quam universam illam elementorum cognitionem facio. Hoc enim vulgo habetur; illud antequam invenies, et oleum multum profecto et impensam expones. Cf. Agaso's claim, note 115.

Monfasani does not note Trebizond's *abste* but I follow Christopher Celenza in taking it as the combination of *abs* and *te*. See Celenza, *Renaissance Humanism and the Papal Curia: Lapo da Castiglionchio the Younger's De curiae commodis* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1999), 100.

¹³⁹ The passage is part of an apostrophe to Vittorino whom Trebizond cites as his true Latin instructor. *Collectanea*, 398. (75) Guarinus tibi magis quam mihi invidet. Imo vero tibi soli hoc loco iniuriatur. Tuam enim in se, non meam, transferre gloriam nititur. Ego, Grecus homo, Latinas didici litteras. A quo nihil ad me. Quanto ab imperitiore didicerim, tanto mihi maior laus debetur, si bene didici. Ego te Guarino doctiorem et quidem multum duco, vel potius te doctissimum, illum ignorantissimum. Si fallor, mea hec est culpa. Nihil ad modestiam tuam. Illud dico: maiori mihi futurum laudi, si bene Latinitatem teneo, cum a Guarino, non abste me doctum dixerem. Mentiri non est meum. Tacere honeste possum. Non taceo. Pietate in te mea cogor, qua non aliter ac parentem sancte te colui.

teaching of rhetoric.¹⁴⁰ As Guarino was a renowned authority on grammar and Trebizond had recently published his own major rhetorical treatise, the slight would have provided Trebizond with another way to denigrate Guarino's learning and applaud his own.¹⁴¹ By rejecting the premise that Guarino was his instructor, though, Trebizond also refutes Agaso's depiction of him as an immoral student. In Trebizond's account, he was not a bad student so much as Guarino was a bad teacher.

By naming Vittorino as his true Latin instructor, Trebizond also embraces the language of the instructor-student bond. It is an implicit response to Agaso's criticisms that allows him to demonstrate that he actually is a grateful and respectful student to his true instructor. It also allows him to make his own accusations about Guarino's immoral behavior. Trebizond employs the same set of concepts as Agaso—arrogance, dishonesty, and glory-seeking—although he cannot, as a foreigner in Italy, express them with a corresponding ethnic stereotype. He sharply criticizes Guarino for passing himself off as his teacher, a criticism he levies first by addressing Guarino and then in an apostrophe to Vittorino himself.¹⁴² Addressing Vittorino, Trebizond argues that Guarino “envies you

¹⁴⁰ Robert Black argues that the social and professional status of grammarians declined in the Quattrocento compared to professors of rhetoric and poetry. Robert Black, *Humanism and Education in Medieval and Renaissance Italy: Tradition and Innovation in Latin Schools from the Twelfth to the Fifteenth Century* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 31-33. There is evidence of bias in the 1431/32 invective of Antonio da Rho against Antonio Panormita, edited by David Rutherford. Rho frequently mocks Panormita as a “measly teacher of ABCs [*grammaticus*]” and a “teacher of childish ABCs [*litterator et paedagogus*].” I cite the section numbers that Rutherford provides. Antonio da Rho, *The Philippic of Antonio da Rho against Antonio Panormita*, in *Early Renaissance Invective and the Controversies of Antonio da Rho*, ed. and trans. David Rutherford (Tempe: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies, 2005), 27 and 145.

¹⁴¹ Guarino's grammatical manual, the *Regulae grammaticales*, was composed prior to 1418, survives in almost forty manuscripts, and remained in use into the seventeenth century. Grendler, noting as Black does a shift in the status of grammar in the Renaissance curriculum, identifies Guarino as one of the last major figures to compose and publish a grammar text. Grendler, 166-169 and 194. Guarino also played an important role in the teaching of Greek grammar. See page 31 above.

¹⁴² For the apostrophe as a rhetorical figure of speech see *Rhet. Her.* 4.22; Quint., *Inst.* 4.1.63-70, 9.2.38-40, and 9.3.26-28.

more than me” and “injures you alone.” He explains that by trying to claim him as his student, Guarino “struggles to claim your glory, not mine, for himself.”¹⁴³ He characterizes Guarino’s attacks on the *RLV* as, by extension, criticisms of Vittorino as well, whom he urges to curb Guarino’s “obstinacy and arrogance...lest all those whom you teach are torn to pieces by your courteousness.” Trebizond relies on the instructor-student bond to argue that it is Vittorino’s responsibility to defend his students. His appeal indicates that the commitments of that relationship work both ways. On the one hand, he adopts the *in loco parentis* language to describe the obligation he feels toward Vittorino, “by which I honor you no differently and piously than a parent.” He likens himself to one of Vittorino’s sons, whom “you begat for yourself by means of your instruction.” On the other hand, as one of Vittorino’s “sons,” Trebizond can expect support from his “father” and protection from “rapacious wolves” like Guarino.¹⁴⁴

As in Agaso’s characterization of Guarino’s students, Trebizond’s discussion of his own students plays a role in his self-presentation and his efforts to define Guarino as dishonorable. This discussion represents a direct response to Agaso’s claim that

¹⁴³ *Collectanea*, 397. (67) Nam scripta nostra huicemodi sunt ut tu ipse, tu, inquam, ipse, ingenti admiratione percussus, laudis ac gloriole nostre, quam sic solidiorem esse tua vides ut eterniorem futuram, aliquid callide coneris aucupari. Preceptorem enim te meum fingis, cum ego Greca a meis, Latina a Victorino Feltrensi acceperim. Deus mihi est testis, Guarine, contempsissem te, non vexassem, neque tam rudi homini respondere voluissem nisi et scriptis meis, quibus doctior factus es, et Victorino preceptor, a quo, ut scis, cuncta que ad Latinitatem pertinent hausimus, et universe Grece propter nos animo et voluntate detraxissem; Ibid., 398. (74) Sed te nunc appello, Victorine. Defende ac protege partes tuas. Siquid Latine lingue in me est, te doctore post deum est. Insurgit Guarinus et, quoniam prima elementa monstravit, maiorum quoque rerum scientiam se duce nos imbibisse proclamat. See also note 139, Guarinus...didici.

¹⁴⁴ *Collectanea*, 398-399. (76) Tu tacebis et Guarini amentiam non redargues tua rapientis, si non re, at minis, litteris, nuntiis? Si de hoc, cum ipso non egeris, si de hoc non questus fueris, si tantam huius impudentiam non castigabis, si contumaciam, si arrogantiam non infinges atque retundes, cave ne omnes quos doces facilitate tua distrahantur. O confidentiam hominis inauditam! O temeritatem incredibilem! Quod multi sciunt—multi? quin vero omnes ferme qui me cognoscunt et te, Victorine, in se transferre impudens homo conatur hinc atque illinc per maiorem invective partem. Hoc in loco moratur. Preceptorem se Georgio fuisse mentitur. Tu veritatem tacebis ac me desereres? Si liberos genuisses rapientibus traderes lupis? Non protegeres? Natura impulses, dices? Nunc quos doctrina filios tibi peperisti, qui, cum liberi non sunt, liberis etiam ipsis, maxime si quicquam de se pollicentur magni, cariores atque iocundiores esse solent, destitues et parvipendes? See note 139 for the preceding text.

Trebizond wrote against Guarino without provocation and therefore dishonorably.

Trebizond explains that he had, in fact, been provoked on two separate occasions when advocates of Guarino had publicly proclaimed before his students the eloquence of their master above Trebizond's.¹⁴⁵ Clericinus Vincentinus was the first to do so. He brought one of Guarino's orations with him and after it was read aloud he praised it and announced that "if he were able to command all Italy, nobody other than Guarino would be appointed to teach rhetoric." Trebizond's description of the scene makes clear that he and his students viewed it as an act of aggression and arrogance. His students were angered at Clericinus' audacity and surprised that Guarino could think Trebizond "so lowly and common...that even in my own home you believed your unjust and fallacious attack would be tolerated." Like Agaso's discussion of Guarino's patrician students, Trebizond's students actively defended their instructor against what they perceived to be unjust and slanderous attacks. One of them came forth at Trebizond's behest to read an oration in the same category, the exordium of which was compared to the exordium of Guarino's speech. Trebizond's description of this episode seems an implicit refutation of Agaso's claims that he was a poor and unloved instructor.¹⁴⁶ The story casts Trebizond as

¹⁴⁵ This passage and the ones in the next two notes are consecutive. *Collectanea*, 405. (101) "At ne verbo quidem fuisti lacessitus." Ego si lacessitus non fuisset, res ipsa, quam verissime scripseram, mihi satisfaceret. Nunquam enim a vero, presertim si ad utilitatem communem pertinet, ulla virum bonum voluptas vel dolor deflectet. Verum si lacessitum quoque demonstrem iam ipso Guarino iudice, omni molestia liberatus sum. (102) Explosum me quondam e Vincentia exilatumque dicis. Tua opera qui me vicinum nolebas. Multa mihi fuerunt argumenta, que non scribo vel ut brevior sim, vel quoniam ad hanc urbem venire cupienti minus acerba. Hic rursus mihi molestiam afferre per tuos non cessabas, sed unum dicam e multis. Cf. note 116 for Agaso's claim that Trebizond had not been provoked. See also note 49 for Agaso's use of a Ciceronian cultural stereotype to make a similar but more general point about Greeks attacking learned men.

¹⁴⁶ *Collectanea*, 405-406. (103) Clericinus Vincentinus domum meam venit, apportans secum in Theodorum, ut opinor, nescio quam laudes. Perlecta oratio est, qua nescio siquid aridius atque squalidius unquam scripseris. Summis eam Clericinus efferebat laudibus, probus quidem vir, sed qui nimio in te studio aberraret. Nam ut odium, sic voluntas nimia et amor vel acutissimorum hominum iudicia corrumpere solet, itaque adiecit se, si toti posset imperare Italie, iussurum nequis preter Guarinum in ea rhetoricam

so loved that his students drove Clericinus away, speechless, perplexed, and embarrassed. Gerardus, Guarino's secretary from Ferrara, arrived a few days later and "with many in attendance" voiced his master's displeasure at the way Clericinus had been treated. Having rejected the claim that he was an ungrateful student, Trebizond presents the arrivals of Clericinus and Gerardus as unjust incursions to illustrate Guarino's own dishonorable behavior.¹⁴⁷

Guarino the Philhellene

Agaso's characterization of Trebizond as an immoral student is only one of the ways by which he argues for his Greek *levitas*. A second strategy involves a story about Trebizond's brother which, although it receives only a brief mention, he intends as another testament to the Cretan's Greek conduct. The latter point is evident in that he follows the story immediately with his comment on the character of Cretan men.¹⁴⁸

Agaso alleges that Trebizond drove away his brother, "a good boy indeed," and "reduced him, wandering, to beg through foreign cities." It is hardly surprising, the passage

doceret. Hec non tam me quam meos qui aderant pertulerant. Circumspiciebant, murmurabant. Exarsi, fateor. An ita demissus ego et abiectus tibi et tuis visus sum ut etiam domi mee iniquum atque fallacem impetum vestrum laturum credideritis? Iubeo afferri orationem adolescentuli cuiusdam in eodem conscriptam genere. Legebatur; exordium conferebantur cum tuo. In singulis elegantius, significantius, expressius, et, quod permagnum est, prudentius te dicebat adolescentulus. Obmutuit Clericinus. Vultu confusus, abiit. Hec ego te duce fecisse ipsum suspicabar. Recens enim erat Vincentie memoria. Cf. pages 44-46 above.

¹⁴⁷ *Collectanea*, 405-406. (104) Post paucos deinde dies venit Gerardus, librarius tuus, e Ferraria. Multis audientibus velle se dicere ait, que tu referenda mihi tradidisti: que Clericinus dixit aut audivit, tibi, narrat, litteris significata fuisse; dolere te mihi succensere quod ita de te sentiam. Ingentem vero regem! Regem, inquam, an tyrannum, qui vel domi sue homines aggreditur, petit, exagitat? Se solum dignum esse qui doceat denuntiet. Ceteros iubeat, si possit, tacere. Et cum re, quantum valeat, vexet, ne verbo quidem lacerare credi vult! Quod si tunc obticuissem, nonne (quod Vincentie mihi accidit) a meis ipsis Clericini verbis assensisse iudicarer? An uni mihi meorum de me existimationem domi in esse retinere non licebit? Tunc ergo certior factus de tuis insidiis, inimicum te mihi cognovi et, ut decet, ingenium aperta fronte odisse cepi. Odisse, dixi? Imo vero magis amare. Nam vitia tua in dicendo vere predicare id est, si sapis, meliorem te facere.

¹⁴⁸ That Agaso intends the story as further evidence of Trebizond's Greekness is evident in that he follows it with his comment on the character of Cretan men. See pages 42-43 above.

suggests, that Trebizond would mistreat his instructor, a man whom he should respect but to whom he offers only a “chick-pea thanks,” if he showed such little regard for his own brother.¹⁴⁹ Worse, Agaso seems to imply that Trebizond’s supposed ill-treatment of his brother was the reason for the younger man’s eventual death. “Do you want to know,” Agaso asks, “who this man is who so demolishes men deceased and living?” Guarino clearly was one of the living men, leaving Trebizond’s brother to represent the deceased men whom he demolishes. While Agaso clearly blames Trebizond for turning his brother away and forcing him to become a beggar, his phrasing suggests he may also be implicating Trebizond in his brother’s death.

Whether or not the Agaso letter was truly blaming Trebizond for the death of his brother, Trebizond responds as if it had. He categorically denies Agaso’s version of events, both the explicit accusations and what he perceived to be the implicit allegations regarding his brother’s death, and offers his own version of his brother’s travels in Italy. In Trebizond’s hands, his younger brother’s story becomes part of a larger argument that—sometimes implicitly, sometimes explicitly—challenges Guarino’s morality and his philhellenic reputation. Here he portrays Guarino as an abuser of foreigners. He describes how his brother was “enticed from Crete” with hopes of serving as a papal secretary and

¹⁴⁹ *Collectanea*, 368. (19) Testis ipse sum quotiens ab Guarino in sermonibus amicorum et litteris, que complures extant, precipuis adornetur laudibus. Quid frontem caperasti? Num et fratrem probum quidem adolescentem sua extruxit importunitate et alienas coegit errabundum per urbes mendicare ut minus mirer et preceptoris suo arietinas referre gratias? Scire vis quisnam is est qui sic mortuos ac viventes exossat homines? E Creta dudum advectus, quo pruna et cotana, vento. For the surrounding text, including the description of the time and effort Guarino had expended on teaching Trebizond and Agaso’s contention that Trebizond should honor Guarino, see notes 44 and 48.

Monfasani’s apparatus notes that in one of the manuscripts Trebizond corrected Agaso’s *fratem* to *fratrem* and replaced *extruxit* with *detrusit*, which makes Agaso’s accusation clearer. *Collectanea*, 375. I take *arietina gratia*, “a chick-pea thanks,” as a reference to size that denotes the very little gratitude Trebizond offers his instructor. It is consistent with Agaso’s use of chick-pea elsewhere, as when he describes Trebizond not as a *novus Cicero*, an exceptional and eloquent man, but as a “chick-pea” [*cicer*], as unexceptional and ordinary. See *Collectanea*, 365 (2) Videre licet... alia milia que novus hic Cicero, vel cicer, magis sua quadam usurpat inscitia?

ventured to Rome at the behest of the pope. Unfortunately, Trebizond explains, he was too poor at the time to support his brother's journey financially. Instead, he provided him with several Greek codices to sell to fund his way to Rome. That is why his brother stopped first at Ferrara and visited Guarino, who, Trebizond continues, "snatched up the books at a cheap price." Far from helping his brother, Guarino cheated him. Now, Trebizond fumes, in the Agaso letter Guarino accuses him of having relegated his own brother to begging.¹⁵⁰ Trebizond's reworking of the tale shifts the responsibility for his brother's plight and death back onto Guarino. The implication that Guarino contributed to his brother's demise by rendering him penniless underscores his characterization of Guarino's immorality. Trebizond's accusations may very well also be read as implicit challenges to Guarino's sincerity as a philhellene. Certainly, Guarino's contemporaries, including Trebizond, were well aware of his interests in Greek studies.¹⁵¹ This is why, in Trebizond's version, his brother stopped at Ferrara. Guarino would have been an obvious contact for someone interested in selling Greek codices. Guarino's aid would have been invaluable to Trebizond's brother because Byzantine émigrés depended so much on the support of influential Italians.¹⁵² Though he does not make the case explicitly, it is

¹⁵⁰ *Collectanea*, 397-398. (70) Ad hec extrusisse me fratrem arguit. Quis hoc unquam suspicari posset preter Guarinum? Fratrem habuisse me multi sciunt. Is clericorum spe illectus e Creta abiit invito patre ut Romam iret. Venit ad me priusquam Romam isset. Hoc quoque multi. Discedenti pecunias tenuis ego conferre ad iter non potui, fraterna caritate motus, non nullos codices Grecos dedi. Quos ut venderet, Ferrara<m> iter faciens, venit ad Guarinum, qui minimo pretio adolescenti libros eripuit. Ac ideo mendicare per alienas urbes putat eum qui eodem ipso anno diem suum obit.

¹⁵¹ On Guarino's philhellenic reputation and on Italian philhellenism in general, see pages 26-27 and 31-32. On Guarino's stance regarding the importance of Greek studies, see pages 57-58.

¹⁵² Trebizond acknowledges himself to have been a beneficiary when describing the support he received from individuals such as Barbaro. Other Byzantines enjoyed similar support, most notably the circle of scholars around Bessarion in Rome. He supported Trebizond for a time, as well as Theodore Gaza, Andronicus Callistus, Andronicus Contoblacas and others. Harris, 101, 128-140, and 189.

reasonable to conclude that Trebizond is challenging Guarino's reputation by casting him not as a supporter or ally of Greek émigrés but as a predator of vulnerable foreigners.

This interpretation gains credence when examining the conclusion of Trebizond's letter—his defense of Greece and Greek learning—where he addresses Guarino's philhellenic reputation and castigates his deceit, hypocrisy, and audacity. He laments that Guarino, of all men, attacks Greece and argues that “if Greece has deserved well from any Italian, from you certainly it has deserved the best, you who, if you had not been instructed by Greeks, would have languished in the dark.” He accuses Guarino of having the audacity to build a reputation for Greek studies and yet to cast aspersions on Greek culture. The passage is another of his attempts to portray Agaso's attacks as against Greeks in general rather than Trebizond in particular. It is also another engagement with anti-Greek language and accusations of Greek *levitas*.¹⁵³ Here he mocks Guarino's hypocrisy and deceit—“you faultless man”—for reproving “the *levitas* and deceit of Greece.”¹⁵⁴ The line turns Agaso's arguments about Trebizond's *levitas* against Guarino. Trebizond implies that in criticizing Greeks as deceitful and dishonorable, Guarino proved himself to be exactly those things. It is for good reason that Trebizond ends his response by taking aim at Guarino's *levitas*—his deceit, audacity, and hypocrisy—since Agaso's description of Guarino focused so much on his *gravitas*. According to Trebizond, Guarino was hardly in a position to judge anybody for *levitas*. Guarino's career was built on Greek studies, Trebizond argues, yet he criticizes Greek culture, attacks scholars including Trebizond himself for being Greek, and, as the earlier story

¹⁵³ See pages 63-65 above.

¹⁵⁴ *Collectanea*, 406. (107) Verum huc loci factus, non possum non dolere quod in Greciam homo tu omnium...inveheris. Atqui si de aliquo Italo bene merita est Grecia, de te certe optime est, qui, nisi a Grecis institutus fuisses, in tenebris iacuisses. Levitatem, fallaciam integer tu homo Grecie increpas?

involving Trebizond's brother suggests, abuses foreigners. Trebizond's response to the numerous anti-Greek attacks of the Agaso letter thus at times engages directly with and seeks to undermine Guarino's well-known philhellenic reputation.

Greek Heterodoxy

The question of Trebizond's Greek morality functions in yet another way during the Guarino dispute, relative to fifteenth-century views of Greek religion. In his *Responsio*, Trebizond devotes a prolonged section to defending himself from what he claims was Agaso's attempt to defame his religion. The anti-Greek language discussed thus far has been predominantly classical in its construction because of the frequency with which Agaso and Trebizond appeal explicitly and implicitly to classical Roman arguments, tropes, and authors. Religion, however, was a thoroughly current issue that deeply tinged attitudes toward Greeks in the west. To contextualize the conversation about religion it is necessary to consider long-standing medieval and early modern cultural assumptions about Greeks. In truth, the distinction between classical and post-classical Greek stereotypes is slightly misleading. Classical conceptions of Greek *levitas* continued to inform anti-Greek perceptions long into the future. Eventually, however, additional stressors between the Byzantine Empire and the west began to add to these stereotypes. Not the least important of these was the divergence between Greek and Latin Christian doctrine and practices and the concept of the Greek heretic.

By the fifteenth century, there was a mutual distrust between Latins and Greeks rooted in religious issues dating back centuries. The Latin addition of the Filioque clause to the Nicene creed in the ninth century served as a significant doctrinal and ecclesiological division between the Greek and Latin churches. Tia Kolbaba argues that

the ensuing debates about the clause served as the impetus for a good bit of “wall-building” by both Latins and Greeks as each side developed arguments about the supposed heresies of the other. The debate effectively “created,” Kolbaba argues, both the Latin and the Greek heretic.¹⁵⁵ Joseph Gill argues that the first three crusades created additional divisions and contributed to suspicion and distrust.¹⁵⁶ Westerners blamed Greeks for the failure to recapture Jerusalem. Jonathan Harris describes how the Byzantine alliance with Saladin during the Third Crusade contributed to the western notion “of Greeks as scheming and untrustworthy.”¹⁵⁷ On the other hand, the Fourth Crusade, the sack of Constantinople, the fifty-seven years of Latin occupation afterward, and the resultant Latinization of Greek religious rites contributed greatly to Greek antipathy toward the west.¹⁵⁸ The outcome was the development of an anti-Latinism among Greeks that remained centuries later and included mistrust, suspicion, prejudices, and a consideration of racial differences.¹⁵⁹ Mutual distrust hindered attempts to unify the Byzantine and Roman churches. The two sides were unable to overcome their differences at the Council of Lyons in 1274 or the Council of Florence in 1438-9.¹⁶⁰ Gill gives anti-Latin sentiment as the reason why the Greeks rejected union after the Council of Florence

¹⁵⁵ Tia M. Kolbaba, *Inventing Latin Heretics: Byzantines and the Filioque in the Ninth Century* (Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute Publications, 2008), 1-3 and 131-139.

¹⁵⁶ Joseph Gill, *The Council of Florence* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1959), 8.

¹⁵⁷ Harris, *Greek Émigrés*, 39.

¹⁵⁸ Gill, 13; Deno Geanakoplos, “The Council of Florence (1438-1439) and the Problem of Union between the Greek and Latin Churches,” *Church History* 24, no.4 (Dec. 1955): 332.

¹⁵⁹ Gill, 396; Donald Nicol, “The Byzantine View of Western Europe,” *Greek, Roman and Byzantine Studies* 8, no.4 (Winter 1967): 329-330, 338.

¹⁶⁰ Geanakoplos, “The Council of Florence,” 324-5.

and in the face of encroaching Turkish forces.¹⁶¹ When the Greeks at Florence first accepted union only to return to Constantinople and reject it, the action reinforced stereotypes among Latins who had long viewed Greeks as heretics, schismatics, untrustworthy, and deceitful.¹⁶²

Fifteenth-century Latin-Greek religious tension sometimes manifested itself in Latin texts as anti-Greek language. This is evident in the reactions to the fall of Constantinople in 1453 which raised the question of whether the west would, or should, launch a crusade. Some blamed the Greeks for the disaster. Poggio Bracciolini's *On the Misery of the Human Condition* (1455) offers an example of this position. Although most in the dialogue grieve the loss of the city—“no previous century had ever witnessed such a terrible and dangerous fall of a city”—Matteo Palmieri blames the Greeks:

I think simple humanity demands our sympathy at the fall of such a city. But if you consider the nature and customs of the Greeks, their treachery, idleness and avarice, it seems to me they deserved their punishment. As to the first, their nature and manner of life are sufficiently explained in Cicero's speech for Flaccus. As to their trustworthiness and devoutness, the attitude they have always taken towards Christians is made clear above all by the destruction of Christian armies which Greek treachery wiped out as they made their way to recover the Holy Land. They have twice now abjured professions of Catholic faith made in church councils [Lyons, Florence]... They were forever imploring the popes for assistance in their hour of need: the help they could very easily have given themselves they sought of others, with the result that the disaster seems to have taken place not through chance but by divine judgment.¹⁶³

Palmieri's response merges classical and post-classical Greek stereotypes. He advances characterizations of Greek treachery and untrustworthiness through Cicero and Greek

¹⁶¹ Gill, 396; Geanakoplos, “The Council of Florence,” 324-5.

¹⁶² Gill, 349.

¹⁶³ Poggio Bracciolini, *On the Misery of the Human Condition*, trans. Martin Davies, in *Cambridge Translations of Renaissance Philosophical Texts*, ed. Jill Kraye, vol. 1, *Moral Philosophy* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 20-21.

impiety through the councils of Lyons and Florence. Moreover, his position regarding divine punishment was not unique.¹⁶⁴

Bravus' invective against Contoblacas includes allegations of divine punishment and accuses Greeks of disgraceful wickedness, perfidy, and heretical depravity. Greeks like Contoblacas, Bravus argues, "dare to mangle Christ with snarling teeth" and their minds are corrupt and entangled in heretical beliefs. Bravus describes them as heretics, schismatics, and inventors of wickedness. He criticizes Greeks for defending their false beliefs, which attests that "you are barbarians, not, as you say, Latins." It is for this reason "and by the just judgment of God" that Constantinople was destroyed and its people were massacred or left to wander and pay the price for their beliefs. Even this catastrophe, he continues, does not "deter your obstinate minds from false beliefs, to which indeed you return like a dog to vomit."¹⁶⁵ As these fifteenth-century texts

¹⁶⁴ Hankins speaks at length about the notion of divine punishment. See also Arabatzis, 478-479 and Harris, 41.

¹⁶⁵ Bravus, 21-45. Quo fit ut magis tibi et petulantiae tuae ignoscendum putem, si garrulis et ineptis quibusdam uerbis latinum genus lacessere non dubitaueris, quandoquidem Christus noster, cuius sacratissimam et integerrimam fidem tuis caninis morsibus lacerare ausus es, te superstitem patitur et terra ipsa te factoris sui hostem publicum ex hominum oculis non absorbet. Horum autem quae merito pateris malorum non tibi, ut affirmas, Latini causa fuere nec in eos tam precipiti et petulanti lingua maledicere debueras, uerum fedissima scelera tua, uel te potius ipsum (qui ad ea perpetranda quam facile currebas) ac perfidiam et hereticam prauitatem tuam tibi accusandum erat, ob que in huiusmodi non immerito calamitates incidisti. Et, nisi corruptam hactenus et hereticis opinionibus irretitam mentem omni falsitate penitus exueris, duriora (mihi crede) supplicia tibi subeundum erit. Nunc inter rosas ac lilia iocaris; audes preterea Graecos religionis excultores ac bonarum artium et omnium inuectores appellare. Hoc profecto tibi lubenter concesserim: illos semper religionis—sed heretice et scismatice—fuisse uerso excultores, bonarum artium a nonnullis Grecorum optimis uiris inuentarum corruptores et omnium demum scelerum inuectores, quod et Virgilius noster testatur: *Scelerumque inuentor Ulixes*. Hec tibi numquam negauerim. Compertum enim omnibus est quantum ecclesiae sacrosancte Romane rebelles semper extitistis, quae sepenumero, cum genus uestrum caeteris fidelibus aggregare uoluerit, uos hereses fallacesque opiniones uestras pro uiribus semper defensare studuistis. Que quidem omnia uos barbaros, non aut Latinos ut ais, esse comprobant. Quamobrem et iusto Dei iudicio factum est ut, diruta Constantinopolis urbe non sine preu<i>a uestri generis strage, huc atque illuc uagantes pertinaciae uestre penas luatis. Neque hoc quoque tam dirum supplicium obstinatas mentes uestras adhuc a falsis sentiis ita detertere potuit, quin ueluti canes ad uomitum redeatis.

The likening of Contoblacas to a dog returning to vomit derives from Proverbs 26.11 and is a staple of invective. Cf. Jer. Adv. Iovinian. 1.39-40. Among humanists, see the use in Petrarch, *On His Own Ignorance and That of Many Others*, in Francesco Petrarca: *Invectives*, ed. and trans. David Marsh

illustrate, east-west religious differences factored into the Renaissance Italian concepts of Greek morality.

The issue of Greek religion emerges in the Trebizond-Guarino quarrel from Agaso's passing remark criticizing Trebizond for using language "completely unbecoming of a Christian man" who "ought to both be and appear to be a good man" and "who professes to instill good mores in his students." The problem was that a Christian, Trebizond, made a reference to plural gods by using the word "deorumque." Agaso makes clear his disapproval by arguing first that "these utterances reflect a particular frame of mind" and then that it is "a sin to use [the name of God] even in jest."¹⁶⁶ It is a short but potentially meaningful passage. On the one hand, it clearly questions Trebizond's ability to serve as an instructor. It appeals to the early modern expectation that instructors were "both to be and appear to be" good men to inculcate morals and lead their students to virtuous lives.¹⁶⁷ On the other hand, it may have been intended as yet another Greek slur in an attack that would have been wholly consistent with his other anti-Greek attacks. The evidence on this point is undoubtedly more tentative. There is nothing overtly anti-Greek about Agaso's remark. Understood against

(Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003), 64 and Antonio da Rho, *The Philippic of Antonio da Rho against Antonio Panormita*, in *Early Renaissance Invective*, ed. and trans. Rutherford, 189. For each work, I cite the section numbers provided by the editors.

¹⁶⁶ *Collectanea*, 366. (8) Eodem in prohemio doctrinas ab auctore ac donatore laudaturus, cum deum hominum patrem satis esset dicere, adiecit "deorumque," credo, ne ranarum patrem aut fortassis cicadarum aut asinorum lector minus cautus intelligeret. Nam vocales he sunt animantes. Verbum profecto Christiano indignum homine, cui deorum nomen vel ioco usurpare nefas est, nedum cum serio et in veritate dicit aut scribit is qui vir bonus et esse et videri debet et probos instillare discipulis suis mores pre se fert.

Agaso is referring to a passage from Trebizond's preface to the reader for the *RLV*. Monfasani has edited the section. Monfasani, *George of Trebizond*, 370-71. Ego id existimo nisi Bertolini, Alani, aliorumque huiusmodi libros nescio an satis utiles transcribere ab his qui docent coacta esset posteritas, aut loco harum nugarum bonorum auctorum opera invenirentur aut saltem auditores non imbuti his delirationibus nudos animos ad humanitatis doctrinas facilius applicarent, quibus nihil unquam utilius, nihil dignius homini a patre hominumque deorumque tributum est.

¹⁶⁷ See pages 71-72 above.

a backdrop of fifteenth-century characterizations of Greek religion, Agaso may have intended his comment as an attack against Greek heterodoxy. Such an attack would have allowed him to imply a host of attendant cultural vices—treachery, dishonesty, untrustworthiness, and obstinacy—that he charged against Trebizond elsewhere.

Regardless of whether Agaso intended his comments as an anti-Greek attack, Trebizond responded as though they were. The question is why he chose to take Agaso's remark as seriously as he did. Certainly, even Italian humanists could be and were accused of unchristian language.¹⁶⁸ I argue that Trebizond felt pressured to respond to charges about his religion because he perceived them as implicit anti-Greek attacks. Given the variety of explicit anti-Greek attacks in the Agaso letter, it would be difficult to blame Trebizond for drawing this conclusion. Furthermore, as a foreigner in Italy, his religious beliefs had already factored into his self-presentation when he had converted to Catholicism years earlier. The pressure to convert can be viewed as another of the stressors Byzantine émigrés experienced.¹⁶⁹ Moreover, the forcefulness of Trebizond's reply amplified his characterization of Guarino's aggression and the injustice of his attacks. He questioned Guarino's motives for commenting on his religion.¹⁷⁰ He has an

¹⁶⁸ Poggio Bracciolini accused Lorenzo Valla of heresy during their dispute. Christopher S. Celenza, *The Lost Italian Renaissance: Humanists, Historians, and Latin's Legacy* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004), 130.

¹⁶⁹ Trebizond had to explain this decision to his family outside of Italy. Monfasani, *George of Trebizond*, 22. Monfasani argues that Byzantine scholars were all but required to convert as a part of assimilating to life in Italy. He adds that while Latins learning Greek simply had to add a new element to their professional competence, Greeks in Italy had to change their personal lives. He knows of no Latin figure who converted to Greek Orthodoxy. Monfasani, "Migrations," 10.

¹⁷⁰ The passage in this note and the next are consecutive. *Collectanea*, 392. (45) Illud mirari non desino unde tu tam repente theologus factus sis, qui me deum patrem hominumque deorumque dicentem velut impium arguis. Tantane, Guarine, indomita tibi maledicendi libido inest ut cum asinos, pecudes, sues, canes, qui nasum inter doctores homines, qualis tu es, ingeramus, aliaque huiusmodi superbia turbatus ac iracundia, quam biennio lenire non potuisti, nos monstra nomines, satiatus non sis, sed tanquam impiis ob illud verbum nobis insultes? Tanta tibi religionis est cura nostre quem omnes norunt, 'deorum' a Christiano

“indomitable desire for slander,” Trebizond argued, and is so “shaken by arrogance and anger” that he issues insults and claims of impiety.

In replying to Agaso’s comments about his religion, Trebizond relied on the same strategies he used to defend his Latinity and *RLV*. The first and most prevalent of these was an appeal to authority. He argued that religious authorities including Dionysius the Areopagite—a “holy man and martyr” whom the “church honors as the highest master of theology”—justified his usage of ‘deorum.’ Trebizond described Dionysius as an “honest man” and “truly a Christian” and suggested that he himself was both honest and Christian for following Dionysius’ usage.¹⁷¹ This emphasis on honesty, holiness, and “true Christianity” was an implicit engagement with Latin characterizations of Greek dishonesty and impiety. Additionally, as he did when defending his Latinity, Trebizond chided Guarino for being unfamiliar with established authorities and for not following the example of Dionysius.¹⁷² He also appealed to his education, noting in a fairly offhand manner—“to make [Guarino] grieve more”—how he learned “the precepts of theology” during his early years in Italy and almost took holy orders. This comment appears almost

dici homine non potest? Saltem adiecisses: nisi ea mente dixerim qua illud edidit propheta, ‘ego dixi dii estis.’ Sed vide quam multa tibi perfecta sunt theologorum volumina. Cf. Ps. 81.6 and John 10:34.

¹⁷¹ *Collectanea*, 392. (46) Dionysius Ariopagita, quem tam ut summum theologie magistrum, quam ut sanctum virum et martyrem ecclesia colit, cuius nomen nescio an tibi, homini religioso et Christiane veritatis doctissimo, notum sit, is igitur Dionysius in XII De celesti hierarchia circa finem tam sanctos viros quam celorum virtutes non ab homine quodam qui errare possit, verum ab ipsa theologia deos non nunquam appellari his verbis ostendit: “invenies autem celestes etiam que super nos sunt, essentias et viros sacros deos a theologia vocari.” Audis, Guarine? Cernis oculis cuius auctoritate obrutus es? Viros sacros, inquit, ipsa theologia deos non nunquam vocat. Ego eloquenti homine, quem virum probum, idest, vere Christianum, esse volo, nullum magis sacrum duco, quem theologia eique similes cum deos nominet quoniam uni deo, quoad eius fieri possit, coniunguntur. Cf. *De cael. hier.* 12.3. Trebizond might also have mentioned Ps. 82. He does include an allusion to Cato’s definition of the orator as a “good man [*vir bonus*] skilled in speaking.” Quint., *Inst.* 12.1.1.

¹⁷² *Collectanea*, 393. (47) Quod si forte credis non ea me mente deos scripsisse qua theologia dicit et Dionysius exponit, erras ignorantia. Nec enim maledicta, non dicam proferre ac scribere, sed ne cogitare quidem probo viro licet nisi prius exquirat, examinet, percipiat quid sit, quod dicitur. Quare, si tibi consultum vis, vita, fide, moribus Christianorum vive; priscorum lingua loquere.

as an aside. Coming so soon after a discussion of his piety, however, the implication is clear.¹⁷³ Lastly, Trebizond's defense of Greece at the end of the letter makes clear that he was treating Agaso's attack as not just personal, but cultural. He articulated a position for which Bravus mocked Contoblacas, the idea that Greeks are truly pious, and referred to the "heroes" and "holy men" of his homeland, worshippers of true religion, men precise in their doctrines, upright in morals, and more pious than any others in the world.¹⁷⁴

Though a relatively small part of their dispute, the question of Trebizond's piety reflects well the dynamics of the feud as a whole. Agaso's criticisms drove the dialogue between the two; Trebizond responded in a way that acknowledged the cultural capital of anti-Greek biases. He challenged Guarino using many of the concepts used against him but faced additional obstacles in defending himself. Certainly charges of ingratitude, arrogance, and impiety were levied against Italians. Trebizond, though, had to fend off the added weight of classical and early modern stereotypes about Greek culture. Trebizond's response therefore reflects his anxiety about his reputation as well as how best to combat the culturally loaded, anti-Greek attacks in the Agaso letter.

¹⁷³ Ibid., 394. (53) Paucissimis deinde annis et Latine ita locuti sumus ut in duabus causis duobus velocissimis in scribendo librariis eodem tempore dicendo suffecerimus, et <precepta> doctrinarum omnium bonarumque artium, addam etiam, ut magis doleas, ipsius theologie, cui relique omnes administrantur (pauca quidem, sed tamen que tibi ad celos usque coacervata viderentur) percepimus, et, nisi onere filiorum oppressi et valitudine deiecti, litterarum studia pene liquissemus.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid., 406. (107). Verum huc loci factus, non possum non dolere quod in Greciam homo tu omnium, in Greciam, omnium bonarum artium inventricem, in Greciam, deorum olim domicilium, non Iovis dico et Iunonis (non ad fabulas refugio), sed multorum heroum et sanctorum virorum (sive vetustissimos ac remotissimos a nostra etate consideres sive nostre, idest, vere, religionis cultores, quos numero plures, doctrinis subtiliores, eloquentia graviores, moribus probatiores, religione sanctiores quam ex reliquo terrarum orbe invenies), in Greciam, inquam, unus omnium, quo te inscribis nomine dignissimus, in Greciam inveheris. Cf. note 165. Bravus criticizes Contoblacas for daring to call Greeks "religionis excultores ac bonarum artium et omnium inventores."

Conclusion

The criticisms leveled against Trebizond in the Agaso letter were in many ways typical of the humanist invective that defined contests of honor. The characterizations of Trebizond as ignorant, arrogant, audacious, shameless, impious, and immoral were verbal strategies crafted to challenge his faculty with the Latin language, question his moral rectitude, and undermine his authority as a rhetorician and instructor. That these were common enough accusations against a professional competitor is evident in that Trebizond counters them by casting Guarino in the same negative lights. He chides Guarino for not understanding classical rhetorical authorities, he questions his knowledge of rhetorical precepts and grammatical usage, and he accuses him of slander, envy, jealousy, and arrogance. The Agaso letter is notable, however, for the extent to which it employs anti-Greek language and stereotypes. Anti-Greek language is in fact an integral part and defining characteristic of the Trebizond-Guarino feud.

This chapter has analyzed the cultural stereotypes employed against Trebizond to demonstrate how anti-Greek language functioned in contests of honor. The purpose of this analysis has been to understand better the strategies of self-presentation and modes of expression available to competing scholars. Agaso used anti-Greek language to tap into a tradition of anti-Greek sentiment with roots in classical Roman literature—especially Cicero—as well as contemporary fifteenth-century thought. It allowed him to define—both explicitly and implicitly—Trebizond as the “typical” loquacious, inept, dishonest Greekling, a man lacking honor, and the kind of man about whom Cicero warned his

brother Quintus. Trebizond recognized how damaging these accusations could be and struggled with how to counter charges of Greek *levitas*.

Agaso's letter and Trebizond's response are valuable indications of how anti-Greek language and a pro-Latin bias affected the experiences of Greek émigrés in early Quattrocento Italy. The present analysis has offered a different perspective from the prevailing arguments that have long focused on the resurgence and embrace of Greek learning during this period. It has argued that there were more obstacles to the acceptance of Greeks in Italy, even among humanists and so-called "elites," than has been acknowledged. Skill in Greek absolutely created opportunities for émigrés but that same background also created additional problems that Italian scholars did not face. Like his Latin peers, Trebizond lived in a world defined by patronage and strove to cultivate a reputation as a knowledgeable rhetorician and teacher. His experiences, however, demonstrate how centuries of negative stereotypes resulted in additional stressors for Greeks fashioning their identities. Agaso labeled him as an inept, loquacious copyist and as another in a long line of deceitful, treacherous Greeklings. Trebizond not only had to prove his worth but he also had to contend with these stereotypes. Moreover, Agaso was able to use a verbal strategy Trebizond could not. Agaso could attack Trebizond as a Greek, but Trebizond could not attack Guarino as a Latin.

The correspondence also encourages a reconsideration of the feud itself and of the individuals involved. At least one of his contemporaries, Poggio, chastised Trebizond for writing so aggressively and with so little evidence against Guarino. Modern commentators have also judged Trebizond to be morose, bitter, and angry. Trebizond's response seems far less aggressive than it might have been given Agaso's criticisms and

that Trebizond was still relatively early in his career. The *RLV* was a major treatise and a capstone for the work he had done since arriving in Italy. Trebizond hoped it would elevate him beyond the instruction of youths and afford him the financial security to which all humanists aspired.¹⁷⁵ It is unsurprising that he responded vehemently in self-defense, especially in light of the anti-Greek language used against him. These letters help us understand Trebizond's more bombastic claims. When he proclaimed to Guarino that he speaks eloquently enough to have been born in Ciceronian Rome, this was more than simple boasting. It was an important statement about his Latinity to a culture that defined professional competency by ability in the language and characterized Greeks not as eloquent but as loquacious, not as knowledgeable but as inept.

The most intriguing part of Guarino's role in the dispute is that he never weighed in under his own name. He may or may not have written the Agaso letter. There are enough interesting parallels between that letter and other works—Guarino's response to the da Monachi comments and Battista Guarino's educational treatise—to suggest that Guarino may have written it. It is of course possible that these parallels were simply common literary tropes. Still, the idea that Agaso was a student of Guarino's seems unlikely. His attitude toward Greeks seems inconsistent with what we know of Guarino's other students, either Barbaro in writing to da Monachi or Battista Guarino in treating Greek learning in his treatise. It is hard to believe that a student of one of the most acclaimed philhellenes would publicly voice the kind of arguments that Agaso makes. Guarino, however, hiding his identity, might have been willing to do so to undermine a competing scholar who had recently challenged his reputation. This makes Guarino's silence even more fascinating. Even if he did not write the letter, he made no attempt to

¹⁷⁵ Monfasani, *George of Trebizond*, 25-27 and 68.

defend himself against Trebizond nor did he say anything about Agaso's anti-Greek attacks. Perhaps Guarino simply thought it beneath him to engage in the dispute, or perhaps by never speaking in defense of "Agaso" his silence should be read as a tacit rejection of the Agaso letter. It seems to me, though, that Guarino had some culpability for his silence given the pretense that Agaso was his student, that the real "Agaso" never stepped forward to prove Trebizond wrong, that the whole exchange grew out of Trebizond's criticisms of Guarino, and that the dispute was public knowledge. Guarino could have simply issued a brief response producing Agaso, distancing himself from his pupil's comments, and moderately censuring Trebizond for jumping to conclusions. To do so would not have required him to stoop to engaging in a controversy with a man he judged his inferior, but it would have allowed him to end it conclusively. Any conclusions about Guarino have to be tentative because his role in the dispute is far from clear, but the circumstances of this exchange raise questions about the nature and limits of Guarino's philhellenism. It is possible, and I argue likely, that Guarino is a major example of an "elite" humanist who, despite his reputation as a philhellene, employed—or condoned the use of—anti-Greek language to contest honor and reputation.

The Trebizond-Guarino dispute occurred relatively early in Trebizond's career in Italy. He had been in the west for approximately twenty years by the publication of his major rhetorical treatise, but had not yet achieved the kind of renown, professional position, and financial security he sought. The *RLV* was intended to elevate his status and his criticisms of Guarino can rightly be considered an attempt to carve a space for himself in the competitive community of humanist scholars. Eventually, though, Trebizond attained the reputation and position he sought. By 1443, he had arrived in Rome and

begun his service in the papal curia under Eugenius IV. In February 1444 he was sworn in as an apostolic secretary, a position highly coveted by his fellow humanists. He continued to serve Eugenius's successor, Nicholas V, in that same position. Even having achieved this success, however, Trebizond continued to take an active part in the construction and perception of his reputation. Doing so became particularly important after a very public confrontation with a fellow secretary, Poggio Bracciolini, in the middle of the curia in May 1452. If Trebizond's dispute with Guarino provides evidence of acts of self-presentation for a figure on the rise, someone seeking to establish and solidify his reputation, the conflict with Poggio illustrates the strategies of a figure desperately fighting to mitigate damage done to his reputation.

CHAPTER THREE

TREBIZOND, POGGIO BRACCIOLINI, AND THE LANGUAGE OF RESTRAINT

Introduction

On May 4, 1452, George of Trebizond, then a papal secretary in the employ of Pope Nicholas V, engaged in a fist-fight in the middle of the chancery with one of his colleagues, Poggio Bracciolini. Conversing with another of his colleagues that day, Trebizond said something less than flattering about Poggio, though he later claimed not to remember what he had said. Poggio, who happened to be walking nearby, clearly overheard whatever it was Trebizond said and crossed the chancery to confront him. The two men came to blows, and the fight ended only when Trebizond reached for a sword from a bystander, sending Poggio into flight. For having threatened his colleague with a sword, Trebizond was imprisoned in the Castel Sant' Angelo. He was released on May 9 after composing a letter of apology, but was not welcomed back to the chancery. He tells us that he spent the next forty days seeking an audience with the pope. After failing to be admitted and after a return to the chancery resulted only in Poggio speaking publicly and adamantly for his expulsion, Trebizond left the curia and Rome. He spent the following years until 1455 in Naples under the patronage of King Alfonso of Aragon, during which time he wrote about the fight and Poggio in an attempt to mitigate the damage done to his reputation.¹

¹ This chapter examines five letters related to the Trebizond-Poggio dispute. In January 1453, Trebizond composed letters to Poggio and Nicholas V, the former addressing the chancery fight and the latter Trebizond's accusation that Poggio had sent assassins to Naples to kill him. Poggio renounced the assassination plot in a letter to Trebizond in February and Trebizond replied with a second letter to Poggio in March. For Trebizond's letters, see Ernst Walser, *Poggius Florentinus: Leben und Werke* (Leipzig:

The conflict in the chancery has been a popular topic, particularly in recent years. John Monfasani established the details of the Trebizond-Poggio dispute in the 1970s. In 2004, Christopher Celenza briefly discussed the chancery fight to construct his argument about the agonistic nature of the humanist community. In 2011, Stephen Greenblatt discussed the fight while examining the competitive nature of the curia in the early Quattrocento. The latter two are excellent examples of recent attempts to develop an understanding of the social practices of humanist scholars, of how they presented themselves to their peers and consciously acted to shape their reputations.² Both works accurately identify the importance of the composition and circulation of humanist writing and the manner in which it was subjected to the consideration of one's contemporaries. Humanist self-presentation emerged out of concern for financial security but also for popular approbation and honor that came from one's peers.³

The present chapter argues that Trebizond's account of the chancery fight and of his relationship with Poggio afterward was a deliberate act of self-presentation derived from a concern about public perception and reputation. Trebizond was no different from his peers in cultivating honor and carefully crafting his reputation, as his dispute with

Teubner, 1914), 501-514. For Poggio's February letter see *Poggii Epistolae*, ed. T. Tonelli, 3 vols. (Florence, 1832-1861), 3:49-52. In June 1454, Trebizond wrote to his son Andreas accusing Poggio of a plot to frame Trebizond for writing letters insulting to the pope. For the letter to Andreas, see *Collectanea Trapezuntiana: Texts, Documents, and Bibliographies of George of Trebizond*, ed. John Monfasani (Binghamton, NY: Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies, 1984), 117-124.

² John Monfasani, *George of Trebizond: A Biography and a Study of his Rhetoric and Logic* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1976), 109-113; Christopher S. Celenza, *The Lost Italian Renaissance: Humanists, Historians, and Latin's Legacy* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004), 125-126; Stephen Greenblatt, *The Swerve: How the World Became Modern* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2011), 145-146.

³ The financial benefits of working in the curia were substantial. On humanism and the secretariat see John D'Amico, *Renaissance Humanism in Papal Rome: Humanists and Churchmen on the Eve of the Reformation* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1983), 31-34; Christopher S. Celenza, *Renaissance Humanism and the Papal Curia: Lapo da Castiglionchio the Younger's De curiae commodis* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1999), 12-13. See also Chapter One, note 4.

Guarino in the 1430s illustrated, and it was for this reason that the fight in the chancery proved to be problematic for him. The vice chancellor investigating the fight concluded that Trebizond had acted inappropriately in wielding the weapon, and Nicholas agreed. Over the next two years, Trebizond embarked on a campaign to revise the public perception of his actions. His correspondence during this period—letters to Poggio, to Nicholas V, and to his son Andreas—lamented the harm done to his reputation. Trebizond frequently portrayed himself as the victim of Poggio’s attacks. At the heart of his defense of himself and criticisms of Poggio was a cultural ideal identifying emotional restraint and rational self-control as the keys to virtuous decision-making and action. The correspondence between 1453 and 1454, including an exchange with Poggio himself, centered on a dispute about emotion, reason, and restraint.

The Trebizond-Poggio dispute offers a means to advance recent scholarship about the experiences of fifteenth-century humanists. The notion that humanists were concerned with status is long-standing, as is the idea that honor was won from one’s peers.⁴ Celenza’s recent work on the “lost Italian Renaissance” explains this process well, describing how humanists employed “oppositional categories” to vilify their opponents. The present chapter, like the preceding one, builds on existing studies that emphasize the importance of honor by examining *how* honor was contested.⁵ Chapter Two addressed this question by examining how anti-Greek language functioned in the experience of Greek émigrés like Trebizond. In Chapter Three, I expand the conversation about how

⁴ See especially Hanna H. Gray, “Renaissance Humanism: The Pursuit of Eloquence,” *Journal of the History of Ideas* 24, no.4 (Oct.-Dec., 1963): 497-514.

⁵ Lapo da Castiglione the Younger, who wrote about the constraints placed on aspiring scholars, has been a popular figure in recent studies. See especially Celenza’s *Renaissance Humanism and the Papal Curia* and *The Lost Italian Renaissance*, 123-127. See also Elizabeth May McCahill, “Finding a Job as a Humanist: The Epistolary Collection of Lapo da Castiglione the Younger,” *Renaissance Quarterly* 57, no. 4 (Winter 2004): 1308-1345; Greenblatt, 138-142.

and why humanists expressed themselves as they did through a consideration of some of Celenza's "oppositional categories."⁶ The Trebizond-Poggio correspondence offers the chance to observe the language and categories humanists relied upon to make their arguments, and therefore the terms of engagement that shaped their contest. An examination of their correspondence allows us to peel back another layer in our understanding of humanist texts and learn more about the concepts and cultural expectations that undergirded the actions of their authors.

Trebizond and Poggio each articulate their arguments about rational self-control and restraint with a similar set of oppositional categories that amounts to a language of restraint. Such language allows them to establish markers for the ideal, the man whose actions are governed by reason, and the opposite, the individual who is driven to action by unrestrained emotion. Three sets of oppositional categories guided the dialogue between the two men. First, prudence and imprudence served as identifying characteristics of the rational and emotional man respectively. Second, honesty and dishonesty functioned in the same manner. When action was guided by reason, a man and his actions were considered honest, forthright, and true. Lying, deception, plots, snares, and traps were the fruit of emotion, the sign of a man lacking self-control. Third, both men identified forgiveness as a marker of rational self-governance and resentment and the pursuit of revenge as indicators of failed restraint. Each man argued that the other's attacks against him constituted revenge, that as revenge these attacks were impelled by emotion and thus irrational, and that his opponent's behavior violated the bounds of propriety.

⁶ Celenza, *Lost*, 121.

A long tradition of classical and medieval thought informed the ideal of restraint that Trebizond and Poggio articulated. Aristotle, Cicero, and the Stoics all wrote about rational self-governance and control of the passions. William Bouwsma laid out the humanist interest in Stoic thought and the role of reason in governing personal and social order in the 1970s in his essay “The Two Faces of Humanism.” Recent scholarship concerned with early modern identity has also explored Renaissance consideration of the passions. Michael Schoenfeldt has argued that the control of desire and discipline of the body became primary means for individuals to define themselves. This regulatory ideal had its foundation in the Stoic belief that, as Schoenfeldt states it, “all emotion is to be routed out, so that the rational self may rule unfettered by the claims of emotion.”⁷ Early modern concepts of self-control became the foundation for the rules of courtly etiquette that writers such as Baldassare Castiglione codified in the sixteenth century.⁸ An analysis of Trebizond’s feud with Poggio, though, reveals that this discourse on restraint was a vehicle for contesting honor in the fifteenth-century curia as well. There were definite rules governing the behavior of curial humanists, even if they had not yet been as clearly formalized as they would be in the next century.

⁷ William J. Bouwsma, “The Two Faces of Humanism: Stoicism and Augustinianism in Renaissance Thought,” reprinted in *A Usable Past: Essays in European Cultural History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 19-73; Michael Carl Schoenfeldt, *Bodies and Selves in Early Modern England: Physiology and Inwardness in Spenser, Shakespeare, Herbert, and Milton* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 17 and 42; Unhae Park Langis, *Passion, Prudence, and Virtue in Shakespearean Drama* (New York: Continuum, 2011), 2. The early modern concept of restraint has figured in studies on a number of topics. On the role of restraint in the family, see Steven E. Ozment, *When Fathers Ruled: Family Life in Reformation Europe* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1983), 135-141. On the emotions and early modern masculinity, see Todd W. Reeser, *Moderating Masculinity in Early Modern Culture* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006). I explore the connection between restraint and masculinity in Chapter Four.

⁸ Douglas Biow, *In Your Face: Professional Improprieties and the Art of Being Conspicuous in Sixteenth-Century Italy* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2010).

I also argue that both Trebizond and Poggio understood themselves to be active participants, agents, in the shaping of their identities. Trebizond's earlier feud with Guarino upholds such an argument as well, as Trebizond was clearly anxious about Agaso's attacks and invested in responding to them to influence public perception of his Latinity and moral conduct. The fight in the chancery, imprisonment, and flight from Rome were, however, far more damaging moments for Trebizond than Agaso's criticisms. Trebizond's Naples correspondence therefore offers a chance to examine humanist self-presentation and thus agency from the perspective of one who was seeking not only to contest honor but also to regain lost honor.

In making the argument for humanist agency, the present analysis lends credence to recent attempts to modify the discussion of Renaissance self-fashioning introduced by Stephen Greenblatt and furthered by New Historicism. Douglas Biow's study of professional etiquette in the sixteenth century is of interest given how prominently propriety figured in the Trebizond-Poggio dispute. He rejects the notion that early modern figures lacked agency. Instead he offers a "flexible" self that "was embedded in a host of social activities...all of which required negotiation of competing, interpersonal social obligations in a manner that enhanced self-hood, rather than completely determining it."⁹ Social realities and cultural ideals clearly influenced their writing, but Trebizond and Poggio express not only a conscious awareness of these factors but also an

⁹ Ibid., 26-27. Biow argues that viewing the self "as a mere shackled historical and discursive construct," or "as an empty cipher onto which familial, political, social, educational, and economic forces have freely inscribed themselves," renders "the self merely the product of those forces" and void of agency. Biow follows two of John Martin's studies in offering a modified version of Renaissance self-fashioning. See John Jeffries Martin, "Inventing Sincerity, Refashioning Prudence: The Discovery of the Individual in Renaissance Europe," *The American Historical Review* 102, no. 5 (Dec., 1997): 1309-1342 and *Myths of Renaissance Individualism* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004). For Renaissance self-fashioning, see Stephen Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning: From More to Shakespeare* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980). See especially Martin's discussion of Greenblatt's *Renaissance Self-Fashioning*. Martin, "Inventing Sincerity," 1314-1315.

ability to use them to advance their own interests. They understood identity as tenuous and malleable. For them, identity was the product of how one presents oneself as well as how one is viewed by others. They each articulate anxiety about the effect that lies and rumor could have on public perception, and the consequences of these for financial security and honor. Their anxiety bubbles up in the language they use, in attempts to present the other man as a liar, angry, bereft of reason, and as a slanderer. Accusations of deceptions or plots all are inherently active expressions. Both men also saw themselves as active participants in the process. They consistently incorporated ideals about virtuous behavior—prudence, honesty, and forgiveness—into acts of self-presentation. In doing so, they sought to defuse their anxiety about the impact that others could have on their reputation. Their writings reveal a sense of self that operated with agency, and their struggles to define themselves and others in a contentious professional world. Trebizond and Poggio each viewed themselves as agents, as active participants, in the shaping of their reputations and identities.

Although Trebizond and Poggio exercised agency in their dispute and their letters should be read as deliberate acts of self-presentation, their attempts to mobilize cultural ideals of restraint were not without problems. Their correspondence also reveals a tension between cultural expectations and the pressures associated with public contests. Contesting honor meant, as Celenza noted, vilifying one's opponent. It was not always easy to do this while maintaining the mantle of self-control. One had to appear rational and restrained in responding to attacks or risk being labeled the opposite. What constituted restraint, however, was debatable, and Poggio and Trebizond attacked one

another for perceived offenses and allegedly immoderate behavior. Both men exploited the tension between ideal and reality in their acts of self-presentation.

The Trebizond-Poggio correspondence can certainly contribute to a more thorough understanding of humanist modes of expression, but it also helps us better assess a feud that has largely been reduced to the outrageous details of the chancery fight itself. Although the fight has garnered attention in recent studies, the correspondence as a whole has not been examined in detail since Monfasani. An examination of the scope of the dispute places us in a better position to understand why each man wrote as he did, Trebizond in particular. While Chapter Two situated Trebizond's reply to Guarino in a context of humanist professional development and the challenges facing Greek émigrés, Chapter Three suggests additional modifications to Trebizond's reputation are in order. Greenblatt, for instance, has described Trebizond as "notoriously morose" and both bitter and resentful after the chancery fight.¹⁰ Much of this comes from the fact that Trebizond's letters were often insulting, abrasive, and self-pitying. Greenblatt's conclusion, though, risks obscuring the circumstances that bound Trebizond's actions. Many humanists struck a resentful tone when they encountered obstacles to financial success or honor, and the curia was particularly competitive.¹¹ Trebizond's correspondence certainly does reflect bitterness and not a small amount of resentment. This should not distract from the fact that reputation was a constant concern and that while in Naples he was arguing from a position of weakness. The most notable aspect of

¹⁰ Greenblatt, *The Swerve*, 145-146. Greenblatt is only one example of a long-standing depiction of Trebizond as having had a difficult personality. Monfasani discusses this as well, though softens his assessment by noting that of the many feuds Trebizond engaged in, his opponents were often the aggressors. Monfasani, *George of Trebizond*, 103-105.

¹¹ See the studies regarding Lapo in note 5.

this correspondence, however, is the extent to which he and Poggio engaged with one another by means of the same concepts. Their shared strategies may not allow for a full revision of Trebizond's personality, but they do help us understand better why he made the claims he did—outrageous though they may seem—and I argue that they help normalize his behavior. This can be seen in an examination of the shared language of restraint both men employ, the first example of which is their concept of prudence.

Restraint and Prudence

Prudence is an important marker of restraint and rational self-control in the writings of both Trebizond and Poggio. It is one of the most frequently used concepts each man marshals to defend himself and vilify his opponent. Their concept of prudence is also extremely flexible, as it intersects with a host of other markers of restraint. Prudence is an especially useful starting point to a discussion of their dispute because much of the backlash against Trebizond in the aftermath of their fight was rooted in the judgment that he had acted imprudently. The chancery fight, though, was not the first disagreement the men had had, nor was it the first time Trebizond had been accused of acting imprudently. Poggio had criticized him for having acted imprudently during the Guarino feud in 1437. In January 1453 and again in March, when he wrote to Poggio about their fight in the chancery the previous May, Trebizond recalls Poggio's earlier criticism. Poggio's judgment regarding the Trebizond-Guarino dispute and Trebizond's response to it illustrates how each man understood prudence, reason, and restraint.

Poggio, Trebizond, and their contemporaries had a wealth of classical and medieval authorities to draw upon in conceptualizing reason, prudence, and restraint. This included Aristotle's discussion of prudence as practical reason guiding ethical

decision-making. For Aristotle, prudence entailed the use of reason to select the most ethical course of action when responding to events.¹² Among Roman authors, Cicero also links reason and ethics.¹³ The *De inventione* lists prudence [*prudentia*—defined as “knowledge of what is good, what is bad, and what is neither good nor bad”—as one of the four cardinal virtues. Another of the four, temperance [*temperantia*—the parts of which include “continence, clemency, and modesty [*modestia*]”—is defined as “a firm and well-considered control exercised by the reason over lust and other impulses of the mind.”¹⁴ The *De officiis* lists both “the full perception and intelligent development of the true”—“in which we place wisdom [*sapientia*] and prudence [*prudentia*]”—and “the orderliness and moderation of everything that is said and done”—“wherein consist temperance [*temperantia*] and self-control [*modestia*]”—among the four cardinal virtues. It also advocates the “subjection of all the passions, and moderation in all things” and identifies as “proper” to “employ reason and speech rationally, to do with careful consideration whatever one does, and in everything to discern the truth and to uphold it.”¹⁵ Among medieval authors, Thomas Aquinas identifies prudence as virtue necessary to leading a good life. He describes it as the application of reason to action that helps stop one from acting out of impulse or passion. Likewise, he defines temperance as a virtue

¹² Arist., *Eth. Nic.* 6.5 1140a2-1140b2.

¹³ For an excellent overview of Cicero’s views of prudence and of the importance of Cicero to Quattrocento concepts of prudence see Robert Cape Jr., “Cicero and the Development of Prudential Practice at Rome,” in *Prudence: Classical Virtue, Postmodern Practice*, ed. Robert Hariman (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2003), 35-66.

¹⁴ Cic., *Inv. rhet.* 2.159-160 and 164. This and subsequent translations are Hubbell’s. Cicero, *De inventione*, trans. H.M. Hubbell (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1949).

The *Rhetorica ad Herennium* likewise defines *prudentia* as “intelligence capable, by a certain judicious method, of distinguishing good and bad.” Temperance—here *modestia*—is “self-control that moderates our desires.” *Rhet. Her.* 3.3-5. This and subsequent translations are Caplan’s. *Rhetorica ad Herennium*, trans. Harry Caplan (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004).

¹⁵ Cic., *Off.* 1.15; 1.18-19; 1.93-94; 1.152-153.

that inclines man to act in accordance with reason and to moderate the passions.¹⁶ In each case, the emphasis fell upon the use of reason to guide decision-making, the goal being to discern the good from the bad and to select the good.

The classical and medieval combination of reasoned decision-making and ethical behavior was evident in the writings of fifteenth-century humanist educators, contemporaries of Trebizond and Poggio. The humanist educational program asserted that instructors could guide their students not only through their studies, but also to virtue. The key was control of the emotions. Pier Paolo Vergerio (1370-1444), drawing on Aristotle, describes the weakness of the rational powers in the young:

excessively credulous, for lacking worldly experience, they believe that whatever they hear is true. Also, their opinions change easily, since their humors are in motion due to growth and they have in abundance the heat which is the principle cause of motion. The soul, in fact, follows the complexion of the body, and thus, just as those who lack something are quick to desire it, so they are swiftly satisfied once they have obtained what they want. The young follow their passions above all and do everything with great vigor because they have keen desires which their bodily heat spurs on, while the rational powers [*ratio*] and prudence [*prudentia*] that could moderate their desires are weak.¹⁷

Vergerio's characterization, that emotion rather than reason governed behavior and that desire had to be moderated, was not uncommon.¹⁸ Renaissance figures understood a clear connection between prudence, reason, and virtue.¹⁹ When he described Trebizond's

¹⁶ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, IIa, q. 57, a5; IIb, q.47, a1, a4, a8; IIb, q. 141, a1 and a3.

¹⁷ This and subsequent translations are Kallendorf's. For all of Kallendorf's edited texts, I cite the section numbers he provides. Pier Paolo Vergerio, *De ingenuis moribus et liberalibus adolescentiae studiis liber*, in *Humanist Educational Treatises*, trans. and ed. Craig W. Kallendorf, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002), 19; Cf. Arist., *Rh.* 2.12.7.

¹⁸ See also Aeneas Silvius Piccolomini, *De liberorum educatione*, in *Humanist Educational Treatises*, trans. and ed. Kallendorf, 21; Battista Guarino, *De ordine docendi et studendi*, in *Humanist Educational Treatises*, trans. and ed. Kallendorf, 3.

¹⁹ Renaissance authors, as Vergerio indicates, also viewed prudence and rational self-control as a sign of manhood. They considered imprudence and emotional behavior as a sign of childishness. I return to these ideas in Chapter Four when discussing the concept of masculinity in humanist contexts.

actions as imprudent in 1437, then, Poggio was stating that his opponent's actions lacked reason and virtue. He was not only saying that Trebizond's actions were inappropriate, but also that they were also literally irrational.²⁰

Poggio, Trebizond and the consultus homo

In September 1437, Poggio wrote to Christopher Cauchus about Trebizond's recent letter to Guarino in response to the letter written by "Andreas Agaso."²¹ He argued that Trebizond's reaction—including his assumption that Guarino had adopted the Agaso pseudonym to attack him—was unreasonable, unethical, and therefore inconsistent with the behavior of a prudent man, a *consultus homo*.²² He defined the *consultus homo* by virtue of the two main aspects of classical prudence, reason and ethics. Trebizond, he argued, responded to the Agaso letter by writing insultingly to Guarino based on mere conjecture. The implication was that the truly prudent man, by contrast, perceives circumstances well, considers them carefully, and does not respond to offenses insultingly. Poggio expressed confidence that Guarino had not written the letter, noting that it was composed in a manner inconsistent with the man's eloquence, learning,

²⁰ Eventually the concept of prudence would change. Martin describes a shift in the concept over the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries leading eventually to Machiavelli in the sixteenth century and the divorce of prudence from ethics. Martin, "Inventing Sincerity," 1323-1324 and Martin, *Myths*, 49-53.

²¹ *Poggii Epistolae*, ed. T. Tonelli, 3 vols. (Florence, 1832-1861), 2:125-128. Tonelli's edition is reprinted in Poggio, *Opera Omnia*, vol. 3, *Epistolae* (Turin: 1964). I cite Poggio's sources as *Poggii Epistolae*. Poggio's letter is an indication of the public nature of humanist disputes and the interest humanists took in the conflicts and reputations of others. Trebizond came upon the Agaso letter in February 1437, composed his response to Guarino in March, and by September Poggio was writing to Cauchus that he had received and read through both letters. Poggio was not directly involved in the dispute but he knew about it, wrote about it in his own letters, and even passed judgment on those involved. Just as the Trebizond-Guarino correspondence circulated among friends like Poggio and Cauchus, so did discussion of ongoing feuds. For an overview of the Trebizond-Guarino dispute, see Chapter Two, pages 24-25 and 30-31.

²² Monfasani, *George of Trebizond*, 70. I follow Monfasani in reading *consultus* as prudent. Here and in subsequent correspondence, Poggio and Trebizond both articulate an ideal situated in reasoned decision-making and thus prudence.

prudence, and style. He speculated instead that it was written “by one of [Guarino’s] students, or by anybody who loves Guarino and hates George.” He added that it would have been unlike Guarino to hide his identity or seek another’s protection rather than to defend himself openly. Poggio was critical of Trebizond’s belief that Guarino composed the letter given the lack of evidence to support the position: “To write with so many words and so insultingly, as though arguing against a clear crime, about which you offer no evidence except an opinion, and indeed an incorrect opinion—by the judgment and belief of others—does not seem to be truly the behavior of a prudent man [*consultus homo*].”²³

Much of Poggio’s rebuke centered on the manner in which Trebizond had responded to Guarino, a manner Poggio considered insulting, lacking restraint, and unethical. Even as he identified Trebizond as a “most learned man and exceedingly eloquent,” Poggio argued he would prefer him “to expend his effort on a more honorable cause [*causa honesta*].” He lamented that Trebizond had chosen contempt and abuse rather than reasoned argumentation. He made clear the link between prudence and self-control by offering an example of appropriate behavior drawn from his own prior dispute

²³ *Poggii Epistolae*, 2:126-127. Libellum quem ad me misisti perlegi diligenter: epistolam, quae Guarino ascribitur, procul dubio affirmarim non esse Guarini; cujus genus dicendi satis mihi est cognitum. Novi ingenium, novi eloquentiam, novi doctrinam, et scribendi morem, ut nihil in illa sit, quod ulla ex parte redoleat Guarinum. Epistolam vero illam arbitror esse conscriptam ab aliquo ex suis discipulis, vel altero quopiam, qui et Guarinum diligit, et odit Georgium, ut uni se gratificari velit, alterum exagitare: nam plura in ea scribuntur, pace dixerim scribentis, quae ornatius, eloquentius, copiosius, prudentius, ut opinor, per Guarinum scripta, et objecta fuissent, sive vera, sive falsa existant. Neque etiam Guarinum adeo timidum ac formidolosum judico, vel ita jejunum in scribendo, ut aut sibi dubitandum fuerit, suscipere palam suam defensionem, aut ad alterius praesidia confugiendum. Trapezuntium vero doctissimum video hominem, et admodum eloquentem, cujus scripta mihi admodum placent. Sed mallem eum impendisse operam in causa magis honesta, magisque accommodata ad explicandas ingenii vires. Conjectura vult assequi, ut Guarinus auctor et scriptor extiterit epistolae conscribendae. At hoc neque me iudice, neque quovis alio, qui recte Guarinum norit, unquam probabit, cum absint plurimum a scripturis suis; scribere tam multis verbis, tam contumeliose, tanquam in reum manifesti criminis, de quo nihil afferas praeter opinionem quamdam, et quidem ab aliorum opinione et sententia disjunctam, non recte consulti hominis esse videtur.

with Guarino. When Guarino had rebuked him for saying he preferred Scipio to Caesar, Poggio had defended himself in such a way as to offend his opponent as little as possible and had replied more moderately than Guarino's initial comments.²⁴ Poggio acknowledged that some offenses must be contested. The question was how to do so. He was clear on this point: "For when something ought to be fought with reason and arguments, voices bursting with insults and abuses, which to those listening are unpleasant, are completely rejected and render our case less commendable."²⁵ Trebizond's response was not only a sign of failed reason, according to Poggio, but of failed ethics.

²⁴ Poggio was referring to the "Scipio-Caesar controversy" of 1435. During that conflict, the participants disputed the relative merits of Scipio Africanus, defended by Poggio, and Caesar, defended by Guarino. The dispute was well-known in Ferrara, given Guarino's school there and his friendship with Leonello d'Este, and in Florence, Poggio's home. For Poggio's initial letter in April 1435, see Poggio, *Opera Omnia*, 1:357-365. Guarino's responses in June 1435 are ep. 669 to Leonello and ep. 670 to Poggio in *Epistolario di Guarino Veronese*, ed Remigio Sabbadini, 3 vols. (Venice: A spese della Società, 1915-1919), 2:220-254. Davide Canfora edited and included an introduction for these texts in *La controversia di Poggio Bracciolini e Guarino Veronese su Cesare e Scipione* (Florence: L.S. Olschki, 2001). Much of the scholarship on the dispute has centered on its political ramifications relative to a discussion of tyranny and republicanism and the respective governments of Ferrara and Florence. See for example Hans Baron, *The Crisis of the Early Italian Renaissance: Civic Humanism and Republican Liberty in an Age of Classicism and Tyranny* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1955), 66-67 and 407-408. Others have followed in this vein: John W. Oppel, "Peace vs. Liberty in the Quattrocento: Poggio, Guarino, and the Scipio-Caesar Controversy," *Journal of Medieval and Renaissance Studies* 4 (1974): 221-265 and Mark Jurdjevic, "Civic Humanism and the Rise of the Medici," *Renaissance Quarterly* 52, no.4 (1999): 994-1020. More recently there are the works of Marianne Pade: "Guarino and Caesar at the Court of the Este," in *The Court of Ferrara and its Patronage*, ed. Marianne Pade (Modena: Edizioni Panini, 2001), 71-92 and Pade, *The Reception of Plutarch's Lives in Fifteenth-Century Italy*, vol.1 (Copenhagen: Museum Tusculanum Press, 2007), 233-247.

In his response to the Agaso letter, Trebizond had criticized what he portrayed as Guarino's habit of disparaging his opponents, and cited Guarino's treatment of Poggio during the Scipio-Caesar controversy. *Collectanea*, 382. Caperare vero frontem aut detrahare tuum non est? At cum in doctissimum Poggium scriberes, tale quid tunc posuisti, ut et hic facis, cum opus acrimonia esse videretur? Multa sunt quibus irretitus teneris.

²⁵ *Poggii Epistolae*, 2:127-128. Quod autem is me suis verbis honorat, esset mihi gratius, si non vergeret in contemptum Guarini, cujus honori a me semper consultum fuit, et praesertim in nostra controversia, qua ei respondi, cum is me paulum laccessisset, quod Scipionem suo praetulerim Caesari. Egi tamen ita meam defensionem, ut eum minime offenderem, nisi ubi causa id necessario postularet. Hoc certe recte videor posse dicere, me parcius quam acceperim, nonnulla retulisse. Ubi enim ratione pugnandum est et argumentis, sunt omnino rejiciendae voces contumeliis et jurgiis refertae, quae et auditoribus sunt ingratae, et causam nostram minime reddunt probabiliorem. See note 16 for the preceeding material.

Poggio composed a second letter about the Trebizond-Guarino dispute in early 1450, years removed from the letter to Cauchus, yet still before his chancery fight with Trebizond.²⁶ The relationship between Poggio and Trebizond had changed by this point. Both served the papacy and they had worked closely in the translation of a pair of Greek texts, Xenophon's *Cyropaedia* (1446) and Diodorus Siculus's *Bibliotheca Historica* (1447-1449). In 1450, Poggio wrote of his appreciation for Trebizond's aid with these translations.²⁷ Still, when looking back on the letter to Cauchus, Poggio maintained his assessment that Trebizond had acted on conjecture, written insultingly, and that his actions did not seem consistent with the behavior of a prudent man. He promised Trebizond, however, on their friendship, that he intended no indignity, no slander, nor any dishonor against him, and stated simply that he thought Trebizond had acted wrongly.²⁸ Poggio did admit he had not spoken carefully enough. He had not meant to imply that Trebizond was an imprudent man but merely that he had acted imprudently in that particular situation. He had, he explains, "slipped into writing those words that could approach the temerity of a false accuser."²⁹ Even this acknowledgment, though, sustained

²⁶ Monfasani, *George of Trebizond*, 70. The letter is not dated but Monfasani follows Tonelli in dating it in the beginning of 1450. *Poggii Epistolae*, 3:21-24.

²⁷ *Poggii Epistolae*, 3:23. Ego enim nedum tuo honori velim in aliquo detractum, sed accumulatiorem reddi mea opera, si fieri posset, cupio, atque etiam ampliorem. Debeo enim tibi plurimum, qui mihi adjutor praecipuus fueris in traductionibus meis.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 3:21-22. Scripsi olim Christophoro Cauco Veneto, cum mihi libellum quemdam destinasset, in quo epistola, quam Guarini existimas, adversus te scripta, et tua responsio continebatur, me procul dubio affirmare illam non esse Guarini, idque multis ex causis mihi persuadens, existimansque solummodo te conjectura moveri, addidi in epistolae meae calce, scribere tam multis verbis, tam contumeliose tanquam in reum manifesti criminis, de quo nihil afferas praeter opinionem quamdam, et quidem ab aliorum opinione et sententia disjunctam, non recte consulti hominis esse videri. Hoc tibi ex animo, proque nostra amicitia affirmit, mi Trapezunti, in nullam tuam contumeliam, nullam detractum, nullum in dedecus ea verba me fuisse compulsum; putavi non recte a te factum, qui rem incertam pro certo crimine insectareris.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 3:23. Ego, ut dixi, existimans te non manifesto crimine, ut asseris, sed conjectura motum illam epistolam confutasse, dixi non videri mihi id recte consulti hominis fuisse, non quia recto fueris consilio usus, sed quia dum scriberem ita mihi videbatur, lapsus scribendo in ea verba, quae possent calumniatoris

the opinion that Trebizond lacked prudence. He had acted on impulse rather than reason and attacked a man without proof.

Poggio's semi-apology failed to persuade Trebizond, and his comments continued to be a point of contention during the following years. In a March 1453 letter to Poggio, Trebizond scoffed at the idea that Poggio's apology in 1450 had satisfied him, and wrote that the only thing he desired from Poggio was that the man recant what he had said.³⁰ More importantly, the concepts of prudence and self-control that Poggio employed in 1437 and 1450 figured prominently in the Trebizond-Poggio dispute, particularly in Trebizond's reassessment of the chancery fight.

Trebizond's Account of the Chancery Fight

In January 1453, Trebizond, writing from Naples, composed a letter to Poggio with his own account of their chancery fight.³¹ The letter was his first attempt to revisit the events of the previous May and to revise how his actions that day were viewed. He delivered his account via a language of prudence and restraint. It is clear that Poggio's past condemnation was at the forefront of his mind, but the concept of prudence was also more immediately relevant for him. Trebizond had been judged—first by the vice chancellor of the curia, and subsequently by Nicholas V—to have acted imprudently by

temeritatem subire. Non enim ad quadram philosophorum verba illa redegei, sed more hominum scripsi, qui libere, nec semper accurate, loquuntur.

³⁰ Walser, 511. Quod ais, credebam tibi esse ex mea defensione abunde satisfactum, quoniam scilicet alias epistolam ad me de iniuria tecum questum conscripseris. Vehementer erras et res forsitan excidit ex tuo animo penitus. Nullam enim epistolam ipse abs te volui nisi que primam omnino ut falsam revocaret.

Trebizond was responding to Poggio's claim in February 1453 that he thought his 1450 apology would be enough to satisfy Trebizond. *Poggii Epistolae*, 3:49. See note 58.

³¹ For the unedited letter, see Walser, 501-504.

drawing a sword against Poggio.³² The similarities between his current situation and past dispute with Guarino were not lost on him, either. Indeed, he made a direct reference to Poggio's earlier criticisms at the beginning of his letter. Reminding Poggio of all the help he had lent him in the translations of Xenophon and Diodorus—by which Poggio “acquired both money and everlasting honor”—Trebizond censured his opponent for thanking him with a letter “in which you write that I am a man too little prudent and provoked easily and without any reason.”³³ It is this depiction of himself as a man easily provoked, whose actions lack careful consideration, which Trebizond sought to overturn. At the same time, he expressed his arguments more explicitly than Poggio did in 1437 and 1450. Poggio's discussion of prudence included no overt discussion of emotional restraint, even though it was clearly an implicit repudiation of what he considered to be Trebizond's irrational—that is, lacking in reason—actions. Trebizond, on the other hand, consistently portrayed Poggio as rash and impelled by emotion. This can be made clear by parsing his description of the chancery fight and noting the markers of prudence he used to defend himself and defame Poggio. My purpose is not to establish what actually happened that day but to see how Trebizond described what happened. In relating the fight as it unfolded, Trebizond drew clear distinctions between what he claimed was his own prudent, restrained behavior and the emotional, imprudent behavior of his opponent.

³² Trebizond does not explicitly state he was judged imprudent, but implies it based on how he describes the judgment against him and how he justifies his behavior. See note 39. Walser, 503. *Nam si statim...cardinalis predicavit verbis tuis confusus...*

³³ Walser, 501. *Nunc autem econtra si conscientiam tuam scrutaberis aut si ab universa Cancellaria apostolica quesieris maxima invenies beneficia in te a Georgio profecta fuisse. Quis enim eorum qui cum locum petere hunc solebant, ignorat et Xenophontem et Diodorum te magnis meis ex Graeco in latinum laboribus vertisse? Unde tibi et pecunia accessit et honor sempiternus. Quibus pro maximis beneficiis quid retulisti, edidisti epistolam que ad manus meas pervenit, ubi scribis parum me consultum hominem esse et leviter et absque ulla ratione moveri.*

Trebizond situates the related contrasts between prudence and imprudence as well as reason and emotion at the center of his account of the beginning of the fight. He was conversing with a colleague, he writes, when he said something against Poggio, who was walking nearby. Poggio overheard the comment and “answered with a shout” that he was lying. He rushed toward Trebizond “with a hurried step” and “in haste” and “with a burst of anger” shouted again that he was lying. The emphasis here is on Poggio’s emotion and aggression. He overheard a private conversation—albeit in a public place—and responded by shouting and charging across the chancery. Trebizond describes Poggio’s movements as swift, hasty, and angry. In contrast, he emphasizes his deliberate response and self-control. He claims he would simply have weathered Poggio’s accusations—which he calls “slander” [*maledicta*—“with patience, like a parent,” except that Poggio then rushed toward him. He stood to meet the man’s charge but only so that he would not be overpowered. Claiming self-defense, he recalls how he braced himself against Poggio’s charge by remaining fixed in his steps and holding out a hand to keep him at bay. This, he contends, was perfectly justifiable, “for everybody knows that violence ought to be fended off.”³⁴

Trebizond relies on a language of restraint and prudence to present the details of this initial encounter. He claims that Poggio approached him first and was the only one to

³⁴ Ibid., 502. Cur enim ipse magis quam tu deliqui? Dimidium facti qui cepit habet sed dices me incepisse. Verbis fateor nam cum omnes socii conquererentur de computo rationis communis, dixi nescio quid in te longius a consensu nostro per atria magna deambulantem. Quod certe non putavi ad aures tuas perventurum, audisti tamen et: Mentiri me magna voce respondisti. Utinam alia quoque huiusmodi conguessisses nihil ego penitus replicassem. Sed maledicta tua magno animo quasi parentis audissem. Sed tu forsitan quia ego silui, neque ipsum compressi contraxique sedens, putasti me timuisse. Citato enim gradu cursim irruisti adversus me, ego ne sedens opprimerer surrexi, nec vestigia movi, sed steti eisdem in vestigiis quasi fixus. Tu cursim atque impetu irruisti ad me clamitans Mentiris. Sicut ego ipse primus verbum dixi adversus te: quod nec auditurum quidem credidi sic tu primus impetum fecisti, immo solus. Nam ego in iisdem steti vestigiis ac ut impetum tuum repellerem manum protendi, et tu in ipsam incurristi. Quid ergo peccavi, profecto nihil.

land a blow. Trebizond twice addresses the question of who hit whom. The first time, toward the beginning of the letter, he claims “I did not go for you with a fist, Poggio, but instead you ran into a fist.” He denies having struck a blow again, later: “Just as I spoke a word against you first (which I believed would not be heard), so you struck a blow first, or rather you alone struck a blow.” Instead, Trebizond claims “how moderately I held you off, for I extended a bare hand against your attack.” He makes an explicit argument that his actions were in fact prudent—here “moderate”—which he reiterates shortly thereafter when he asks Poggio to “consider with what dignity” he acted in remaining fixed in his steps and stretching a hand to fend him off.³⁵ Each of Trebizond’s claims about who struck whom reflect his anxiety about the perception that he had acted imprudently.³⁶

Trebizond’s concept of prudence—linking practical reason and ethical decision-making—and efforts to present himself as a *consultus homo* are evident again when he addresses the possibility that Poggio never intended to strike him. “Perhaps you will

³⁵ Ibid., 502. Vera sunt hec dices, sed tamen pugno postea me petiisti. Non petii ego te pugno, Poggi, sed tu incurristi in pugnum; Ibid., 502. Quid ergo peccavi, profecto nihil. Sed hoc aliorum et conscientie tue iudicium sit. Nemo enim est qui nesciat vim esse repellendam. Repuli et quam moderatissime, manum enim extendi nudam in irruentem. Si hec vera non sunt, precor ut omnia mala que dici fingique possunt veniant in me et in liberos meos. See note 34 for the preceding text; Ibid., 503. Vide quam graviter feci, non mutavi vestigia, sed ne me pulsares (ad id enim te irruere natura me ita docente putavi) manum ad propulsandum impetum protendi.

Monfasani writes that Trebizond “stopped him [Poggio] with a punch,” citing Lorenzo Valla’s account of the fight as evidence. Monfasani, *George of Trebizond*, 110. For Valla’s account, see Lorenzo Valla, *Opera Omnia*, 2 vols. (Basel: 1540; repr., Turin: Bottega d’Erasmus, 1962), 273-274. Valla, it should be noted, was not present for the chancery fight and wrote of Trebizond’s punch while in the middle of his own feud with Poggio. The Poggio-Valla feud is discussed below, pages 136-138. Trebizond may very well have punched Poggio but whatever the facts the key issue for my analysis is how Trebizond relates the events in a way that challenges the perception of him as imprudent.

³⁶ Trebizond repeats his claims in subsequent letters. In his March 1453 letter to Poggio, Trebizond maintains that he had simply fended Poggio off. Walser, 509. Tunc ego fateor culpam in te retulisse qui longe aliquantulum a nobis deambulabas. Audisti verba mea et clamans: mentiris irruisti in me. Ego manum ad repellendum te natura duce protendi.

In June 1454, Trebizond argued the same in a letter to his son Andreas. *Collectanea*, 120. Nec dubitabant posse hoc se calumnia id facere, qui iam bis fallaciis me suis indicta causa oppresserunt: primum, quando irruentem in me Pogium manu repuli; deinde, cum me secretariatu privassent. On Trebizond’s spelling of Pogius, see note 88.

claim,” he writes to Poggio, that “yes, you did charge at me, but not with the intention of striking.” Trebizond counters that he had no way of knowing what Poggio was thinking but could only react to the evidence before him: “Was I so divine as to know in what spirit you charged against me? I heard you shout loudly ‘You lie, you lie,’ and I saw you advancing rapidly, even at a run.”³⁷ Regardless of the accuracy of his account, he describes the fight in this manner to present himself as reasonable. Even as his colleague ran toward him shouting, Trebizond notes he had the rational state of mind not to attack, but to defend himself merely by putting his hand out.

Trebizond focuses just as intently on his thought processes in describing the key moment in the conflict, his decision to use a sword. That decision led the vice chancellor to decide against Trebizond—who repeatedly laments that he was never allowed to explain his side of the story—and call for his imprisonment.³⁸ Given his imprisonment and exit from Rome, Trebizond expends a great deal of effort explaining why he had wielded the sword. After fending off Poggio’s initial attack, Trebizond explains, Trebizond was helped to his desk by his colleagues. Poggio, however, continued his assault. Poggio stretched out a hand and stuck the index finger into Trebizond’s mouth while grasping his cheek with his thumb. With his other hand, Poggio stretched out his fingers “to dig out both my eyes,” even as Trebizond twisted in his seat to evade the attempt. Trebizond casts his response as prudent:

³⁷ Walser, 502-503. Id tu similiter non predicabis, sed dices forsan, quod prudenter se hic putavit quidam et quidem in cetu doctissimorum hominum pro te dixisse, te irruisse quidem sed non pulsandi animo. Deusne ego eram ut scire possem quo animo irrueres. Tonare te verbis audiebam Mentiris, mentiris, citatoque gradu immo cursim ferri videbam. See note 35 for the preceding and following text.

³⁸ Monfasani speculates that the cardinal in question was Francesco Condulmer. Monfasani, *George of Trebizond*, 110. Trebizond also alleges that Poggio tricked the others in the curia into believing him, and claims this was why his side of the story was not heard. See pages 119-122.

O poor, unlucky me, how prudently I acted at that time and how irresponsibly I was judged to have acted. I could have justly bitten the finger driven into my mouth: I did not. It occurred to me, since I was sitting and you were standing, to crush your testicles with both hands and to lay you flat in this way: I did not. I asked for a sword from those present so that I might drive you away by fear of it. And this idea did not disappoint me. For in fact, you immediately hurried away from that place like a Florentine woman in flight. What wrong, then, did I do if I requested a sword to drive you away?³⁹

Restraint and prudence are crucial to Trebizond's explanation. He claims he did not rush to action and was not impelled by his emotions, adding that he did not immediately reach for the sword when Poggio first charged him. Instead, he surveyed his options and chose to frighten the man rather than to harm him. Trebizond's focus again falls on his thought process, which allows him to emphasize his reason, and on his action, which allows him to assert his ethical behavior. Like his account of the rest of the fight, his discussion of the sword was not simply a plea of self-defense, nor was it merely the bitter complaint of a man who had been judged guilty. It was a deliberate framing of his choices intended to refute the public perception of his actions as imprudent.

Restraint and Deception

Prudence and imprudence mark rational self-control or its lack, but honesty and dishonesty are equally markers of restraint and failed restraint. Each man used the

³⁹ Walser, 503. Cumque postea multis accurrentibus resedissem, tu dextra protensa indicem digitum in os meum immisisti et cum pollice simul teneram partem faciei tenebas. Aliam vero manum ad eruendos utrosque oculos duobus digitis protensis in ipsos circa meum caput vitantis et huc atque illuc caput circumferentis immitebas...O meme miserum, o me infelicem quam gravissime tunc feci et quam levissime fecisse iudicatus sum. Potui digitum in os immisum meum dentibus iure concidere: non feci. Venit in mentem, cum ego sederem et tu stares, utrisque manibus testes tuos comprimere ac te ita prosternere: non feci. Gladium a circumstantibus quesivi, ut eius timore te pellerem. Nec me fefellit opinio. Illico enim ut Florentina femina fuga inde te rapuisti. Quid ergo mali feci si gladium petii, ut te fugarem? Nam si statim a principio cum te impetum in me ferri vidissem, gladium quesuissem: faterer a me peius factum fuisse, quam quidam cardinalis predicavit verbis tuis confusus...

Perhaps because of the absurd details of the fight, this passage has proven popular in recent studies. Greenblatt notes Trebizond's attempt to present himself "as having acted with exemplary restraint," although he addresses the issue of restraint only briefly. I argue that prudence and restraint were key parts of Trebizond's self-presentation. Greenblatt, *The Swerve*, 145-146.

additional set of oppositional categories in a variety of ways, including of course accusations of lying, but also in references to deceptions, traps, snares, or plots.

Trebizond and Poggio characterize honesty as the conformity of statement and action to fact and as an open and straightforward manner of behavior. They portray dishonesty as the disjunction between statement, action, and fact as well as a manner of behavior that obscures and hides rather than operating openly. Their language of honesty is rooted in the decision-making process. Trebizond and Poggio both describe dishonesty as an irrational and unethical reaction to events, and a sign of an emotional nature. Anger, cruelty, and savagery indicate a lack of reason and self-control and explain why an individual lies, deceives, and plots against others. Dishonesty is thus a marker of failed self-control and failed prudence.

It is in articulating this combination of honesty, prudence, and restraint that Trebizond and Poggio most clearly demonstrate their interest in self-presentation. Both men express anxiety about how lies and deception can influence public perception. The model of ethical prudence allows them to combat these effects. Each presents himself as mobilizing practical reason for ethical ends, to dispel lies and reveal rather than obscure the truth. Their arguments are also an indication of the tensions between the ideals and realities of the humanist experience. Practical reason and ethical decision-making may have been the ideal, but the worries of both men suggest this was not always upheld.

Their correspondence allows for some modification of recent analyses that note a change in the early modern concept of prudence. Recent studies take Machiavelli's *The Prince* and Baldassare Castiglione's *The Book of the Courtier* as evidence of a sixteenth-century shift from a prudence rooted in ethics toward what John Martin has termed a

“prudential rhetoric.” The phrase prudential rhetoric, as Martin explains it, denotes a shift from the classical conception of ethical prudence to a point when prudence became “an ethical strategy that gave new emphasis to the individual’s will” and was “divorced entirely from ethics.” Martin then cites Machiavelli and Castiglione on the importance of lying, dissimulation, and concealing one’s true beliefs in everyday interactions. The emphasis regarding prudence remained on deliberation, reason, and reaction to circumstance, but early modern authors began to embrace different actions—including dissimulation and craftiness—to attain one’s goals.⁴⁰ As recent examinations of the curia have demonstrated, however, lying and dissimulation were characteristic of, and much lamented by, Quattrocento humanists. Trebizond and Poggio were not alone in their concern about dishonesty.⁴¹ Despite whatever changes were occurring in the Renaissance concept of prudence, ethical prudence and its qualms with lying and dissimulation remained a key part of the strategies of Trebizond and Poggio.

Dishonesty figures prominently in Trebizond’s reassessment of the chancery fight in January 1453 and Poggio’s response the following month. This is especially true of a pair of accusations Trebizond levies against Poggio. First, he accuses Poggio of lying about his own role in the fight, of misleading the curia afterwards, and of engineering Trebizond’s expulsion from the chancery. Second, he accuses Poggio of having sent assassins to Naples to kill him. Trebizond warns Poggio that he wrote about the latter allegation to the pope himself in another letter of January 1453. Poggio’s February

⁴⁰ See the works of John Martin in note 9. Martin, “Inventing Sincerity,” 1324-1325. On the shift regarding prudence see Victoria Kahn, *Rhetoric, Prudence, and Skepticism in the Renaissance* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1985) and Nancy S. Struener, *Theory as Practice: Ethical Inquiry in the Renaissance* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1992). On Machiavelli and the new notion of prudence see Eugene Garver, *Machiavelli and the History of Prudence* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1987).

⁴¹ See Greenblatt’s chapter on the “Lie Factory.” Greenblatt, *The Swerve*, 135-155. See too the studies on Lapo in note 5.

response directly addresses these allegations and, like Trebizond's January letter, relies largely on a language of dishonesty and imprudence.

The Exit from Rome and the Assassination Plot

Trebizond devotes much of his January letter to claiming that his imprisonment and eventual departure from Rome were because of Poggio's anger and lies. He makes a case for Poggio's lack of restraint and unethical behavior by linking these lies to his emotions, including anger, rage, and cruelty. The crux of his argument is that Poggio misled the curia into believing that Trebizond bore sole responsibility for their conflict. Trebizond establishes this argument early, asking Poggio whether he is ashamed "to have so confused the whole truth that you flung me down into that foulest prison." Trebizond accuses him of having tricked the curia, men who believed Poggio to be an honest man, and of having so confused the matter that Trebizond's side of the story was never heard. He attributes Poggio's deception to his emotional state, arguing that if he "had not been at that time completely unreasonable on account of [his] rage [*furor*]," he would have admitted his part in the fight.⁴² Poggio's alleged dishonesty also allows him to explain how the vice chancellor, an otherwise "venerable and prudent man," would render a verdict against him. The vice chancellor "erred greatly in this matter" "because, deceived [*deceptus*] by you, he refused to listen to the other [Trebizond's] side." He adds that Poggio's influence over the vice chancellor convinced the pope that Trebizond's testimony was unnecessary and then repeats his allegation that Poggio "misled him and

⁴² Walser, 502. Nam per Deum immortalem Poggi, ut amicus enim te colloquor, non pudet te ita veritatem tunc omnem confudisse, ut in fedissimum me coniecero carcerem nec interrogatum quidem contemptum enim fuit clamoribus nonnullorum potentium qui cum te probum virum crederent, decepti fuerunt; contemptum inquam fuit illud aureum preceptum: audi alteram partem. Quod tu ideo fecisti quia non ignorabas quomodo res se habuit. Certe Poggi nisi pre furore omni tunc ratione caruisses te ipsum magis quam Georgium accusasses. See note 34 for the following text.

several other cardinals, who either think you are a good man, or love you by virtue of a prior relationship.” He ends the passage commenting on Poggio’s cruelty [*crudelitas*] and blaming his imprisonment on how Poggio had obscured the truth.⁴³

Trebizond claims Poggio’s lies were also instrumental in his exit from Rome. At the beginning of his January letter, he argues that Poggio “cast [him] down into the filthiest prison” and also “shamefully drove [him] from the apostolic chancery.” After their fight, Trebizond explains, he “conceded the matter to [Poggio] and left Rome with the greatest loss of honor and property.”⁴⁴ Trebizond’s concern for honor is clear but he also indicates the financial consequences of humanist contests. He reiterates these points in his letter to Nicholas V composed at the same time as his January letter to Poggio. The letter juxtaposes Poggio’s supposed anger and dishonesty with Trebizond’s own prudence and self-control. Trebizond left, he tells Nicholas, for fear of what Poggio might devise against him.⁴⁵ He claims again that Poggio manipulated the curia against him and

⁴³ Walser, 503. Qui cum sit vir gravis et prudens in hoc tamen maxime erravit, quod alteram partem audire abs te deceptus neglexit. Non enim dubito, si audisset quod non tanto furore dominum nostrum decepisset. Sed tu illum et nonnullos alios cardinales qui te vel bonum virum putant, vel prisca coniunctione affinitatis diligunt, confudisti. Illi una tecum dominum nostrum nec mirum si multi unum sic, incitastis ut altera pars nec interrogata quidem fuerit. Sed de his satis. Non enim ut corrigantur, quod res preterite fere nequeunt, narravi: sed ut ostendam quanta sit crudelitas tua, hominem de te bene meritum et in carcerem per iniuriam obfuscata veritate per te coniectum. See note 39 above for the preceding text.

Cf. Trebizond’s June 1454 letter to Andreas, where he accuses Poggio and Giovanni Aurispa of circulating forged letters—purportedly written by the king of the Turks and insulting of Nicholas V—to block Trebizond’s return to papal service and see him imprisoned again. I return to the forged letter plot below, pages 139-146. *Collectanea*, 120. Quare sic? Ut cum omnes intelligant qui eas legunt non esse a rege Turcorum conscriptas, Georgius, qui Neapoli habitat, scripsisse criminaretur, et indicta causa vel furca vel perpetuis vinculis damnaretur. Unde id patet? Coniecerunt me biennio antea Aurispa et Pogius in vincula et quidem indicta causa. Liberatus ad optimum omnium regum Alfonsum Neapolim profugi.

⁴⁴ Walser, 501. Tantisne Poggi adversus me furor tibi conceptus est, ut cum et fedissimo carcere affligeris et ignominiose quantum ad te attinet e Cancellaria expuleris apostolica, cumque preterea ego ipse re tibi cesserim atque Roma cum maximo tam honoris quam rei familiaris detrimento abierim, tam longo tempore transacto non deferbueris?

Trebizond’s claim that he lost property likely refers to his loss of the salary associated with his position as apostolic secretary. Monfasani reports no official move to strip Trebizond of his position, yet by being refused reentry to the chancery Trebizond had essentially lost that income. I know of no actual property that Trebizond lost. On the contrary, we know from a letter in June 1454 that his son Andreas

explains that Poggio's anger still had not abated.⁴⁶ He had tried to reconcile with Poggio after their fight, he writes, but was hesitant to do so in the chancery because he had heard a rumor that he would be expelled if he returned. Poggio refused to meet him anywhere else. Trebizond takes this as proof of his opponent's insincere interest in reconciliation and continued animosity.⁴⁷ He then describes how he had returned to the chancery after forty days to see whether Poggio was still angry. Upon his arrival, those in attendance sent for Poggio, who spoke publicly with the vice chancellor about expelling Trebizond. Rather than wait for the decision, Trebizond left the chancery and Rome. He "decided it was prudent to depart," he explains, "because I understood [Poggio's] mind was implacable [*animus implacabilis*], and because I saw that several cardinals said and did everything he wanted."⁴⁸ Trebizond emphasizes his own reasoning and prudence here

continued working in the curia after his father left for Naples. Trebizond urges Andreas to leave Rome at the end of that letter. I think it likely that Trebizond retained holdings in Rome after his departure. Monfasani, *George of Trebizond*, 113-115 and 137

⁴⁵ For the letter to Nicholas see Walser, 504-506.

⁴⁶ Trebizond emphasizes the conflict with Poggio in his decision to leave Rome but also tells Nicholas he had previously considered leaving because he felt he was not receiving the proper respect for his translation work. See Monfasani, *George of Trebizond*, 109-113. Cf. Walser, 505. Quod libentius feci quantum id ipsum iam antea cogitaram propter iniurias improbissimi hominis Jacobi Cremonensis, quem non ignorabam aperte conari labores meos in se ipsum transferre. Sed postea B.P. Sanct. Tua que veritatis vicarius est omnem mihi certius aperuit veritatem, que humanitate insita sibi et veritatis manifestande amore commentarios meos ab ipso scedularum appositione fedatos cum affixis scedulis misit. Quarum aliquae aperte significant nonnulla me bona ab idoneis ut verbo suo utar auctoribus sumpsisse que cum ipse non intellexerim, se melius illa expositurum quando tempus dabitur. Ita vir bonus clam mihi insidiabatur perfecissetque nisi S. Tua luce hac clariores improbi atque ignorantis hominis insidias fecerit, ita ut negare nullo pacto possit. His ergo rationibus libenter Poggio cessi, presertim cum non minus Rome quam hic essem peregrinus, sed non sufficiunt hec omnia Poggio.

⁴⁷ This section is also an example of the related theme of resentment, discussed below, pages 130-146.

⁴⁸ Walser, 504-505. Ego sanct. Pater, nulla re alia magis istinc abii quam timore ne durities Poggii Florentini quicquam durius atque asperius adversus me innovaret. Nam post illum casum qui mihi culpa sua invectus fuit, quamvis rogatus litteris meis quas ex fedissimo carcere ad ipsum scripseram veniam dederit. Intellexi tamen ipsum ficto animo, quoniam tua S. ita volebat fecisse. Nam cum paratum me semper ad reconciliationem ubicumque preter quam in Apostolica cancelleria non ignoraret, ipse sepenumero simulavit se quoque paratum, sed non alibi quam in cancellaria. Cujus rei testis est Marcellus Rusticus. Id ego idcirco recusavi, quoniam certior factus rumoribus iam eram quod ignominiose

and throughout his January letters to Poggio and Nicholas. He conceded the matter to Poggio—at the loss of honor and property—because he understood that the man was unable to control his anger, that his lies had been effective, that the men of the curia believed Poggio to be honest, and that they would continue to take Poggio’s word over his own.

Trebizond’s narrative of his departure from Rome is essentially an amplification of his description of the chancery fight, where he argues that Poggio’s anger clouded his reason and impelled him to violence. When he discusses his imprisonment and departure, Trebizond speaks in greater detail about Poggio’s character. This is an important shift from describing an isolated outburst of emotion to a more substantial statement about the man’s very nature. Poggio attacked him, but then lied about it afterwards, confused the cardinals, feigned an interest in reconciliation, and even forty days later spoke publicly for Trebizond’s expulsion. The implacability of Poggio’s anger and his consistent dishonesty allows Trebizond to cast him not just as prone to emotion and deception but as defined by them.

Trebizond’s portrayal of Poggio’s anger is a critical component of his third example of his opponent’s dishonesty and lack of restraint: the assassination plot. He writes about the supposed plot to both Poggio and Nicholas in January 1453. To Nicholas, Trebizond relates the details of one of what he alleges were Poggio’s three

Vicecancellarius inde me expulsurus erat. Deinde cum propter peccata mea nullus mihi aditus ad S.T. daretur nec aliquis cubicularius vellet me cum aliis secretariis admittere, post XL dies experiri volui si iam furor in me suus deferbuisset. Peti ergo cancellariam. Et statim a nonnullis et quidem aperte missum fuit pro eo. Venit et cum Vicecancellario aperte de ignominiosa expulsione mea peregit. Quid statuerit nescio. Nam postquam Poggius inde abiit, ego etiam timens ne post abitum ipsius fieret, quod optabat, abii statim, non inde solum sed eodem ipso die ex Roma Neapolim versus. Nam quoniam vidi animum eius implacabilem vidique nonnullos cardinales omnia dicere ac facere, que ipse vellet, magni animi esse putavi, cedere. For the following material, see note 46.

attempts to send assassins to Naples to kill him.⁴⁹ Trebizond's focus shifts here from Poggio's lies and obfuscation after their fight to the plots Poggio developed over time. He twice comments to Poggio on the duration of the man's anger and dishonesty, first noting Poggio's efforts to ruin him with plots and then his attempt to pursue him with a sword.⁵⁰ I read the latter as a comparison to the charges against Trebizond after their fight. Trebizond is suggesting that even though his prudence had been questioned for using a sword that day, it was Poggio who continued to threaten him in a similar manner long after the fight. The phrasing is undoubtedly exaggerative, as Poggio was not personally wielding a sword against him, but rather, if Trebizond's accusation is to be believed, he hired men to do so. The statement amplifies Poggio's error, though, and makes Trebizond's own decision seem the less egregious of the two offenses. Poggio, after all, had had plenty of time to cool his anger. Trebizond implies the same to Nicholas, arguing

⁴⁹ The assassination accusation may sound outrageous but physical violence was not unheard of among fifteenth-century humanists. In May 1433 Francesco Filelfo was scarred by a knife attack from an assailant hired by an associate of Cosimo de' Medici in Florence. Paul Grendler, *The Universities of the Italian Renaissance* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002), 213. Trebizond, however, was likely trying to capitalize on public knowledge of Poggio's vitriolic feud with Lorenzo Valla, another curialist. Trebizond hoped that the Poggio-Valla feud would help convince Nicholas and any who read his letter that Poggio capable of violence. In his March 1453 letter, Trebizond reminds Poggio of the man's own proclamation that he intended to see Valla killed. See page 136.

The Poggio-Valla feud was still ongoing when Trebizond wrote to Nicholas in January 1453. Poggio eventually left Rome after becoming the chancellor of Florence in April 1453 but that did not lessen the animosity between them. Monfasani reports how Niccolò Perotti—one of Valla's supporters and the secretary of Cardinal Bessarion—sent an assassin to Florence to murder Poggio. The Florentine government sent a letter of protest to Bessarion and Perotti was forced to write a "humble apology." Monfasani, *George of Trebizond*, 122. Poggio continued to bear ill-will toward Valla while in Florence. Writing to Pietro Tommasi in 1454, he cast Valla as a beast and a heretic who ought to be whipped, imprisoned, and burned at the stake. Celenza, *Lost*, 130; Salvatore Camporeale, "Poggio Bracciolini versus Lorenzo Valla: The *Orationes in Laurentium Vallam*," in *Perspectives on Early Modern and Modern Intellectual History*, ed. Joseph Marino and Melinda W. Schlitt (Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 2001), 31.

⁵⁰ Walser, 501. Sed per insidias me coneris occidere, ita nullum omnis honesta cogitatio de rebus humanis locum in te habet, ut non possis cogitare mortalem te quoque esse, divinique auxilii sicut omnes homines egere. For the preceeding text, see note 44; Walser, 503. Cuius iura qualiacumque sint: nunquam audita fuerunt, qui cum detrimento tam honoris quam rei familiaris tibi cessit adhuc longo tempore transacto longe absentem gladio prosequeris. For the preceeding text, see note 43.

that Poggio was dissatisfied with his departure and that “the arrogant mind [*superbus animus*] of that man” could not be quelled even months later.⁵¹

Trebizond’s account to Nicholas of the assassination plot contrasts Poggio’s plotting and implacable anger with his own rational self-control. He relates how on December 15, 1452, he was studying when he was told that two armed men wished to speak with him. Trebizond notes that he thought this odd. He had the men told he was in the Castel and sent a member of his household to follow them. The men went immediately to the Castel, where they waited for the rest of the day. They came again another day, and Trebizond had them told he was at Sant’ Agostino, a nearby monastery. This time, however, they recognized Trebizond’s servant following them and retreated. Fearing they had been discovered, they reached out to Trebizond. They admitted to having been asked to kill him but contended they had agreed only in order to warn him. Although he had considered legal charges—he met with three people to discuss the option—Trebizond pardoned the men for fear that public opinion about the affair, even if false, would turn against Nicholas.⁵² Trebizond’s argument is predicated on the fact that

⁵¹ Walser, 505. Nec semestri et ultra spatio temporis superbus hominis animus potui mitigari, sed mittit satellites hucusque ad occidendum me quam rem ter iam tentavit. Primo manifestissime Novembri mense deinde XV die Decembris et his diebus Tercio quamvis huius tertii aggressus coniecturalia signa non necessaria fuerint. Aliorum duorum manifesta necessariaque. Sed ne longior sim, secundum aggressum tantummodo narrabo. For the preceding material, see note 46.

⁵² Walser, 505-506. Quintodecimo Decembris S.P. studenti mihi nuntiatum fuit, venisse duos armigeros qui mecum loqui vellent. Ego ipsa conditione, atque arte hominum percussus responderi feci, quod essem in castello et statim misi qui eos sequerentur. Recta via petierunt castellum. Expectaveruntque ad primam usque horam noctis altero die similiter venerunt, responsumque ipsis a me per nuntium fuit quod essem in sancto Augustino quod monasterium non minus quam mille passibus distat a domo mea. Misique similiter qui eos per totam diem illam observaret. Recto itinere Sancti Augustini monasterium illi petierunt, collocaveruntque se in locis unde possent a monasterio exeuntem videre. Sed minister meus non potuit caute diutius eos observare. Nam post horam unam circiter ab illis perspectus fuit. Et statim inde recesserunt. Cognoverant enim illum esse ministrum meum, per quem sibi responsum fuit domi mee. Unde timore percussi antequam ego de capiendis ipsis ordinem dedissem, prevenerunt et per quendam venerabilem fratrem et sacre Regie Maiestati in primis dilectum mihi nuntiarunt quod ipsi me ad salutem quesivissent meam: rogatos se fuisse Rome cum istac transirent ut me occiderent seque assensisse non ut facerent, sed quo me admonerent, ut caveam. Ita ego non precibus illorum magis victus quam quod viderem

Poggio was still working in the curia. He is suggesting that Poggio's behavior, if it became public knowledge, could reflect poorly on Nicholas himself. Trebizond casts his actions as rational and restrained by relating how he accurately perceived the danger of the armed men and by framing his pardoning of them as an act of discretion. He brought the situation to Nicholas, he writes, so that a proper solution could be arranged.⁵³

Trebizond's reassessment of the fight, his imprisonment, his exit from Rome, and the assassination plot all reinforce his contention that Poggio was dishonest. He uses Poggio's supposed dishonesty as an illustration that Poggio had acted wrongly in their dispute, that his actions were the result of failed restraint, and that his actions indicated an individual driven to action by emotion. Trebizond's narrative is a complex account rooted in the charges against him after the fight—imprudence, the use of the sword—and in Poggio's previous criticisms of Trebizond's response to the Agaso letter. Poggio challenged this narrative and each of Trebizond's allegations in his February 1453 letter.

Poggio's Response: Trebizond's Pattern of Abuse

Poggio's response offers radically different accounts of the chancery fight and the assassination plot.⁵⁴ Much of his letter consists of a rejection of Trebizond's allegations, which he dismisses as clear lies. He denies ever having done anything offensive to

hanc rem si patefieret nonnihil etiam ad Sanctitatem Tuam quanvis falso opinione tamen multorum pertinere libenter ipsis ignovi, nec ex me Deum testor et conscientiam meam quispiam aliquid hac de re percepit, preter tres apud regem non infimos quorum consilio usus sum de querendis capiendisque ipsis. For the preceding material, see the previous note.

⁵³ Walser, 504. Post oscula beatorum pedum sanctiss. pater. Audeo nonnihil fretus inaudita Tue Sanctitatis mirabilique humanitate referre. Que postquam pepercerit Sanctitas tua supplico ut dignetur oportuno remedium adhibere; Ibid., 506. Ita res se habuit Beatissime Pater quare S. Tue supplico ut primo propter deum, deinde propter te et conscientiam tuam, tercio propter homines (non enim omnino fama et existimatio negligenda est). Dignetur Georgii humillimi fidelisque servitoris ac filiorum suorum, et in hac re et in ceteris iura et rationes propius aspicere.

⁵⁴ For Poggio's February 1453 response see *Poggii Epistolae*, 3:49-52.

Trebizond, disparaging him, or standing in the way of his interests.⁵⁵ He argues that he had no part in the supposed assassination plot, and that Trebizond had so escaped his attention that he was unsure whether he was alive or dead. Poggio claims the very allegation is absurd. “Do you really think me so stupid, so imprudent [*imprudens*],” he asks, “as to be willing to commit my reputation [*fama*] and good name [*existimatio*]” in such a plot?⁵⁶ Poggio’s disavowal is a clear articulation of his concern for reputation. He repeatedly characterizes Trebizond’s claims as false, unjust, slanderous, and ridiculous. The entire assassination plot is “nothing.” It is a “false and ridiculous complaint.” Nicholas knows him too well to believe such an accusation, and surely he is not “so noted an assassin and so occupied in the murder of men” that anybody else would believe him to have taken part in such a plot.⁵⁷

⁵⁵ Ibid., 3:49. Ego nihil unquam, quod jure te deberet offendere, contra te egi; non verbo, non litteris tibi unquam detraxi; non commodis tuis unquam obstiti, sed dilexi ut virum doctum usque ad eam diem, qua tu acceptam de communi pecuniam per fraudem denegasti, quae nostri discidii causa fuit. Nunquam aliquid de te cogitavi, quod non solum tibi, quamvis iniquus sis iudex, sed cuiquam bono viro debeat displicere: tu an idem feceris, tuae litterae satis impudenter scriptae testantur.

Poggio levies a new charge in claiming that Trebizond had committed fraud. Trebizond denies the allegation in March 1453 and casts it as another example of Poggio’s attempts to ruin him. Walser, 509. Sed ad veritatem quam modo dixisti, falsum illud statim addidisti: usque ad eam diem ais, qua tu acceptam de communi pecuniam per fraudem denegasti: quae nostri discidii causa fuit. Acceptam ego pecuniam negavi? Quis hoc preter te unquam dixit? aut quando tu id quod ego resciverim nisi modo? Nec fuit causa discidii ut tu appellas nostri. Non pudet te tam aperte mentiri? ...Vide igitur prudentiam tuam ne stultitiam dicam. Furem me modo facis, quod nec tunc quidem quando pugno repulsus exarsisti adversus me dicere ausus fuisti.

⁵⁶ *Poggii Epistolae*, 3:51. Ego tibi persancte possum jurare, non solum tui tollendi consilium non coepisse, sed te ita excidisse ex animo, ut vivus ne, an mortuus esses non satis memoria tenerem: nimium, mehercules, ocio inerti abundarem, si de Trapezuntio cogitarem. Itaque neque fuit unquam, neque est ulla in me cura tale facinus perpetrandi; quippe qui multis de causis optem, ut diutius vivas, praesertim per foenus amissis pecuniis, quae tibi tantam superbiam subministrabant. An vero ita me stultum putas, ita imprudentem, ut nescio quibus vanis hominibus, qui te inani ostentione terrent, meam famam et existimationem, ut de animae salute omittam, committere voluisse? Absit a me talis cogitatio, nedum opus.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 3:50-51. Non intelligebam, neque enim expresseras in litteris ad me tuis, quae causa te ad me lacerandum impulisset; sed in copia litterarum, quas ad Pontificem scribis, cognovi quid quereris, me scilicet percussores ad te occidendum ex Urbe misisse mense Decembris; quod totum cum nihil sit, honestum foret nihil quoque tibi a me responderi. Veruntamen rectius fuisset id facinus in tuis litteris inseri, ut a te ipso cognoscerem in quo me tam acerbe accusares. Nam quid opus fuit, nisi ad malivolentiam et infamiam adversus me excitandam, falsam et ridiculam querelam ad Pontificem deferri? Nunquid ita sum

Poggio renounced Trebizond's charge as a falsehood contrived by a man who continued to harbor an enmity against him. He argued that Trebizond had concocted his false accusation to ruin Poggio's reputation. His motive, according to Poggio, was Poggio's prior comments about Trebizond's treatment of Guarino in 1437. Even though he had later apologized and indeed praised Trebizond—a reference to his letter in 1450—Poggio writes that Trebizond was dissatisfied. Still aggravated and unable to control his anger, Poggio continues, Trebizond made his false allegations about the chancery fight and the assassination plot. Regarding the former, Poggio claims that Trebizond “recounts a lengthy story” to blame him for the fight and accuses Trebizond of unjustly twisting events to support his weaker position.⁵⁸ Regarding the latter, Poggio states that the assassination charge was Trebizond's obvious attempt to harm his reputation: “For what need was there, except to excite ill-will and dishonor against me, for a false and ridiculous complaint to be brought to the pontiff?”⁵⁹ Although he expressed confidence that Nicholas knew him too well to believe the accusation, Poggio understood and labeled it as Trebizond's attempt to turn public opinion against him. Like Trebizond, he expressed anxiety about the effect that lies could have on reputation.

ignotus Pontifici, aut notus sicarius, et in caede hominum hactenus versatus, ut existimes Pontificem, aut alios, credere me talium insidiarum fuisse auctorem?

⁵⁸ Ibid., 3:49-50. Arguis me ob rem antiquam, quod olim scripserim in quadam epistola, te nominans, parum bene consulti hominis videri; idque in tuam contumeliam scriptum putas. Quam rem alias et verbis, et per epistolam apud te purgavi; scribing multa in tuam laudem, quae rectius tacuissem, credebam tibi ex mea defensione abunde satisfactum. Sed animus tuus, ut video, exulceratus, quoniam alia desunt, ex inanire iurgandi causam quaerens, conceptum contra me odium nequivit continere, ne dum in Trapezuntio, sed ne in Catone quidem fuissent ea verba contumeliosa. Si tantum in te consilii esse putas, ut errare nequeas, nimis tibi omnium iudicio arrogas; si errare te posse fateris, non mireris id de te dictum, quod sapientissimis quoque viris aliquando videmus objici, cum dicantur ea egisse, quae non bene consulti hominis esse videantur. Narras longam fabulam in rejiciendo in me praeteritorum culpam, quae existimabam tibi jam ex animo, prout mihi acciderat, excidisse; quae acta sunt, nequeunt immutari: sed ab iniquo interprete saepius in malam partem vertuntur. Cf. Poggio's 1450 letter, pages 109-111.

⁵⁹ *Poggii Epistolae*, 3:51. Nam quid opus fuit, nisi ad malivolentiam et infamiam adversus me excitandam, falsam et ridiculam querelam ad Pontificem deferri? See note 57.

In dismissing Trebizond's accusations, Poggio expands on his previous assessment of his opponent's prudence with a consideration of what Trebizond's lies reveal about his character. In 1437 and 1450, Poggio had criticized Trebizond for having acted rashly and without evidence in writing insultingly against Guarino. Poggio argues similarly here about the assassination plot, claiming that posterity would prove Trebizond had perceived the situation wrongly and lashed out without evidence.⁶⁰ Now, though, Poggio draws substantive conclusions about Trebizond's character. He describes Trebizond's letter to him as "extremely insulting and insolent beyond what is proper of your habits and learning," and proclaims that he forgives Trebizond for his nature and the perturbation of his mind.⁶¹ This statement establishes a connection between emotion—Trebizond's perturbation—and the resultant action—the writing of insulting letters—but also connects to his adversary's nature. His characterization of Trebizond is similar to Trebizond's portrayal of Poggio the previous month. Each man casts the other as captive to emotion in the moment as well as over time, a sure sign of someone whose very nature is lacking in self-control. They both portray the other's anger as manifesting itself in lies or plots. Poggio proceeds to argue that the failure of his 1450 apology to satisfy Trebizond indicates his opponent's arrogance. Even the wisest men, Poggio lectures, occasionally act in a way unbefitting a *consultus homo*, but he implies that Trebizond believes he ought not be held to that level of scrutiny. The truth, he continues, is that

⁶⁰ *Poggii Epistolae*, 3:51. Persuade tibi quod libet: futurum tempus te ostendet male sensisse, et incertam suspicionem pro certo maleficio accepisse. Cf. Poggio's similar assertions in 1437 and 1450, pages 107-111.

⁶¹ *Poggii Epistolae*, 3:49. Recepi tuas litteras, ultraquam mores tuos et doctrinam deceat, contumeliosas nimium ac petulantes: ignosco naturae tuae et animi perturbationi, in qua ex tuis verbis intelligo te versari. Sed ne videar tacendo, vel assentiri, vel contemnere quae scribis, et ut me purgem in eo, quo me inique et falso accusas, respondebo paucis, et paulo modestius quam tu, ne in quo es reprehendendus te videar imitari.

Trebizond is simply an irascible man [*iracundus homo*] who lies to avenge an old grudge. It is for this reason that Poggio dismisses Trebizond's account of the chancery fight, at the same time claiming for himself the mantle of restraint by refusing to stoop to disgraceful language, as he accuses Trebizond of doing.⁶²

Poggio juxtaposes a depiction of Trebizond's enduring anger, lack of restraint, and lies with a characterization of his own rational moderation. His strategies are similar to Trebizond's, who defended his actions as reasoned in contrast to Poggio's alleged dishonesty. Poggio claims that his response will be more moderate than Trebizond's insulting letter and that he refuses to alter his habits and use abusive language.⁶³ He also declares that if Trebizond had imitated his moderation [*modestia*] in handling the assassination issue, he might have freed both men from having to deal with the accusation of a plot. As an example of his moderation, Poggio writes about a rumor he claims to have heard recently, that Trebizond had requested and procured from King Alfonso of Aragon Poggio's property in Naples. Despite the report, Poggio continues, he neither complained nor wrote insulting letters to Trebizond. Instead, trusting in Alfonso's prudence, he merely assumed the story was false.⁶⁴ Whether true or not, and Monfasani believes it was not, the purported rumor fits well with Poggio's characterization of

⁶² Ibid., 3:50. Tua tamen verba tanti faciam, quanti hominis iracundi, et hac in re non rectum iudicium sequentis: neque vero propter tuas calumnias mutabo mores meos, neque tecum verborum turpitudine, sed virtute contendam. See note 58 for the preceding text.

⁶³ For Poggio's claims of moderation, see the previous two notes.

⁶⁴ *Poggii Epistolae*, 3:51-52. Tuum est credere ut voles; ego mea conscientia contentus ero: si tamen modestiam a me praestitam, in qua me laudo, fuisses imitatus, et te, et me inani labore et molestia liberasses. Nam cum ad me, dum essem nuper Florentiae, a pluribus scriptum esset, te possessiones meas a rege inclito Aragonum dono postulasse, atque impetrasse, non sum tecum eam injuriam questus, neque quicquam ad te scripsi contumeliosum, existimans famam, quae ferebatur, non esse veram, et id factum a prudentia tanti principis alienum.

Trebizond as rash.⁶⁵ Unlike Trebizond, Poggio implies, he does not leap to conclusions and attack others based on false allegations. Alongside his comments about Trebizond's past impulsive behavior, Poggio's response to the rumor, based on what he knows of Alfonso, is intended to demonstrate his own restraint.

Poggio and Trebizond employed very similar strategies in accusing each other of dishonesty and praising themselves for their own reasoned prudence. Dishonesty served as another marker of failed self-control, but over a long period of time, especially as a part of a pattern of abuse, dishonesty represented a substantial character flaw. Their concept of dishonesty also brings into sharper relief their anxiety about reputation and identity. Each presented the other as a deliberate actor whose lies were intended to distort public opinion. They understood that their identities were contingent on how others viewed them. Their language of dishonesty further reflects an underlying tension in humanist interactions. Both men condemn dishonesty, but in seeing it as a part of the other's strategies, they illustrate that it remained a part of contests of honor.

Restraint and Forgiveness

Poggio's February 1453 letter pushes to the forefront another significant marker of restraint, forgiveness. Here and in Trebizond's March response, forgiveness functions as a sign of reasoned self-control. The concept of forgiveness in fact dominates the dispute from February into March. Each man emphasizes his ability to forgive offenses while claiming the other is unable to do so. Their discussion on this point intersects with their concepts of prudence and honesty. They each characterize those who are able to forgive as prudent and honest and those who are unwilling or unable to forgive as

⁶⁵ Monfasani, *George of Trebizond*, 123.

imprudent and dishonest. For both men, forgiveness serves as an ideal mode of conflict resolution. The expectation was that one responds to offenses by either forgetting or forgiving. A public display of forgiveness could also demonstrate the forgiver's honor, while the refusal to forgive could be condemned as a sign of dishonor.⁶⁶

The concept of forgiveness that Trebizond and Poggio articulated was problematic for them both. The imperative to forget injuries does not in and of itself allow for the contests of honor that were so important to humanists. Each man struggles to balance the ideal to forgive with an impulse to respond to an opponent's accusations that he worries could tarnish his reputation. Anxiety about reputation results in some moments of uncomfortable rationalization for both men. Each man leaves room in his concept of forgiveness to accommodate necessary responses to injury. The compromise involves issuing a moderate response. This compromise too, though, is problematic for both. It creates an ambiguity in the ideal, since what constitutes an injury, whether a response to an injury is actually necessary, and what qualifies as a moderate response all become subjective and a matter of perspective. Each man exploits this ambiguity to characterize his opponent not simply as dishonest or imprudent, but as hypocritical.

Defining the Ideal

Poggio's renunciation of the assassination plot in February 1453 offers the clearest articulation of the ideal of forgiveness. Forgiveness is evident, of course, when he forgives Trebizond's "nature and perturbation," which led him to send Poggio

⁶⁶ Poggio had tried just such a public display when he wrote his letter of apology to Trebizond in 1450. When he wrote again to Trebizond in February 1453, he mentions that he thought his letter would have satisfied Trebizond. That it did not, Poggio implies, is a sign of Trebizond's dishonor. See note 58.

“insulting and petulant” letters.⁶⁷ Later, in addressing the assassination charge, Poggio claims that rather than taking part in such a plot, it is his habit to follow the teachings of wise men that injuries ought to be forgotten rather than avenged by force or violence.⁶⁸ This position differs from the one he had expressed during the Trebizond-Guarino feud, when he had declared that certain offenses can and ought to be answered with “reason and arguments.” Dealing with offenses was not as simple as merely forgiving, it seems. In the 1437 letter to Cauchus, Poggio noted that the appropriate way to respond was not in the insulting fashion in which Trebizond had attacked Guarino, but in a moderate manner, as he himself had done during his own dispute with Guarino. There is a practical purpose for doing so, as insults make one’s case appear less commendable, but he also argued that a prudent man should be mindful of an opponent’s honor.⁶⁹ These two approaches, forgetting injuries or responding moderately, assume that a proper response requires rational self-control. Poggio vacillates between both in his February letter. First, he expresses his intent to respond to Trebizond—a necessary response, Poggio argues, so that his silence will not be misconstrued as assent—more moderately than Trebizond wrote to him. He adds to this his refusal to use shameful language. Second, his reference to the advice of wise men, that one should simply forget offenses, frames his discussion

⁶⁷ In January 1453, Trebizond sent Poggio two letters. The first was addressed to Poggio and included Trebizond’s reassessment of the chancery fight. The second was a copy of the letter Trebizond sent to Nicholas V detailing the supposed assassination plot. *Ibid.*, 3:49. See note 61.

⁶⁸ *Poggii Epistolae*, 3:51. Est moris mei, tum reliquis in rebus, tum in hoc sequi praecepta sapientum, quae jubent oblivione potius, injurias esse, quam manu aut viribus ulciscendas. For the preceding text, see note 56. For the following text, see note 60.

⁶⁹ For Poggio’s 1437 letter to Cauchus and the reiteration of his ideas in 1450 see pages 107-111.

of how he dismissed the rumor of Trebizond's alleged acquisition of Poggio's property in Naples.⁷⁰

Though Poggio shifts between the two responses, he also struggles to integrate them effectively, which suggests his awareness of and difficulties with the tension between them. Poggio's inconsistency is evident in one extended passage. First, he attempts to craft a moderate response that avoids insults and abuse. Here he dismisses Trebizond as an irascible man and proclaims that he will not betray his standards and employ shameful language because of his opponent's false accusations. Still, he stops to make one point and issues a suggestion: "See that you do not make false accusations against another that, once thrown back against you and yours by no means falsely, would cover you with disgrace." Poggio's statement serves as a warning to Trebizond that, if pressed, Poggio would take more drastic action. The possibility of a threat aside, even as a mere suggestion the statement seems condescending. Poggio prefaces it with dismissive name-calling, calling Trebizond irascible, that is consistent in its condescension with his assertions elsewhere that he had given Trebizond so little thought since their fight that he knew not whether he was alive or dead.⁷¹

Second and immediately thereafter, Poggio appears unsure how to reconcile his repeated protests that Trebizond's assassination accusation is absurd with the act of responding to it. The most telling example occurs when he explicitly states that since the

⁷⁰ *Poggii Epistolae*, 3:49. See note 61; *Poggii Epistolae*, 3:51-2. See notes 64 and 68.

⁷¹ *Poggii Epistolae*, 3:50. Tua tamen verba tanti faciam, quanti hominis iracundi, et hac in re non rectum iudicium sequentis: neque vero propter tuas calumnias mutabo mores meos, neque tecum verborum turpitudine, sed virtute contendam. Unum tamen dicam: vide ne alteri falso objicias, quae in te et tuos haud falso rejecta, te rubore perfunderent.

See note 56. Poggio adds that if he had given any thought to Trebizond, it would have been a sign that he had too much free time on his hands. Poggio's sarcasm is inconsistent with a moderate response that avoids insults.

whole accusation is nothing, it may be more honorable not to respond at all. He does not resolve the tension here, but instead simply moves past it to label the charge as false and ridiculous again.⁷² One might forgive Poggio's response given that, as he points out, Trebizond made the assassination accusation to the pope without telling Poggio first, but the manner in which Trebizond made his accusation does not make Poggio's response any less contradictory. If Trebizond's claim was false and ridiculous and it would have been more honorable not to respond to it, then by his own standards Poggio ought not have responded. In both cases, Poggio gestures to the cultural ideal, outright forgiveness or at least a moderate response, but chooses to ignore it, even if to make just one point. Poggio's inconsistency was indicative of a fundamental problem facing humanists contesting honor in the court of public opinion. Restraint may have been the ideal but it was not always easy to maintain in the face of challenges to one's honor or, as in Poggio's case, allegations of murderous plots. Poggio's tenuous incorporation of these two models of conflict resolution became a focal point of Trebizond's March letter.

Poggio and Failed Forgiveness

Trebizond's March 1453 response exploits the tensions in the humanist concept of forgiveness to construct a portrait of Poggian hypocrisy. He is highly critical of what he argues is Poggio's inability to abide by the ideal of forgiveness he espouses and takes advantage of the ambiguity concerning what qualifies as a moderate response. Trebizond begins his letter by challenging Poggio's claims that he forgave Trebizond and that he

⁷² *Poggii Epistolae*, 3:50-51. Non intelligebam, neque enim expresseras in litteris ad me tuis, quae causa te ad me lacerandum impulisset; sed in copia litterarum, quas ad Pontificem scribis, cognovi quid quereris, me scilicet percussores ad te occidendum ex Urbe misisse mense Decembris; quod totum cum nihil sit, honestum foret nihil quoque tibi a me responderi. Veruntamen rectius fuisset id facinus in tuis litteris inseri, ut a te ipso cognoscerem in quo me tam acerbe accusares. Nam quid opus fuit, nisi ad malivolentiam et infamiam adversus me excitandam, falsam et ridiculam querelam ad Pontificem deferri?

would write more moderately than Trebizond himself had.⁷³ To the former, Trebizond asks why Poggio had responded at all, suggesting that the very act of response was a failure to forgive. “Does he forgive,” he asks, “who returns like for like?”⁷⁴ To the latter, he argues that although Poggio had complained about his “insolent and insulting” language, he had himself used insulting language. “From the start,” he accuses Poggio, “you declare my letters to be insulting and insolent and by doing so declare I am as well.” He remarks later that hurling insults [*convicior*] hardly qualifies as replying more moderately than one’s opponent.⁷⁵ Moreover, Trebizond denies Poggio’s premise that he had written insultingly and counters that he had spoken as the gravity of the assassination plot demanded. He contends that he had brought a fair complaint before Poggio, who responded by labeling his writing—and therefore himself—as insolent and insulting and dismissing the complaint as a lie. By Trebizond’s estimation, not only had Poggio failed

⁷³ For the March letter see Walser, 506-514. Walser, 507. *Contumeliosas petulantesque ais a me recepisse litteras, deinde addis: Ignosco nature tue, et animi perturbationi, sed ne videar tacendo assentiri respondebo. Quid ais Poggi? Si ignoscis cur respondes? Ego nihil aliud quam litteras ad te misi, conquestusque sum de iniuriis a te mihi illatis. Tu respondes et quidem contumeliose et primum dicis, te ignoscere deinde respondes. Non exclamabo hic ignorantiam, nec conscientie stimulos convocabo. Omnem enim vim orationis modo tibi condono. Sed te moneo ut iterum atque iterum consideres, quid dicas. Igoscit qui par pari refert? Ubi hec didicisti? quis id te docuit? Nec certe id dicere potes, ideo te mihi ignovisse, quod non ita contumeliose scripseris. Nam ego nihil in te dixi contumeliose, sed acriter et vehementer ut res flagitabat. Tu statim incipiens, contumeliosas et petulantes litteras meas hoc est me ipsum appellas. Sed mee an tue littere petulantes, ut verbo utar tuo, magisque contumeliose sint, aliorum sit iudicium, devenient enim ad posteros usque. Ego id contendo non ignoscere ipsum, qui eo modo ulciscitur, quo lesum se putat etiam si minus reddat, sed cum non propter impotentiam sed propter modestiam nihil refert. Tu litteras accepisti, tu litteras reddis. Verbis te lesum conquereris et verbis falso ledis et ignoscis?*

⁷⁴ Trebizond also articulated a moral imperative to forgive wrongs in his January 1453 letter as well, stating that even if he had wronged Poggio, his aid in the translations of Xenophon and Diodorus would have required Poggio to forgive him. Walser, 501. *Si maxime in te deliquissem, si maximas tibi contulissem iniurias, fuisset tamen humanitatis tue ignoscere presertim cedenti.* See note 33 for the following text.

⁷⁵ Walser, 508. *Respondebo, ais, paucis et paulo modestius quam tu, ne in quo es reprehendendus te videar imitari. Modestius respondet qui nec respondet quidem sed conviciatur?*

to truly forgive by responding at all, but he had also failed to reply moderately. Poggio had failed on both accounts.⁷⁶

Poggio's failed forgiveness figures prominently in Trebizond's defense of the assassination plot accusation. He wrote to Nicholas, he tells Poggio, because he was aware of Poggio's past refusal to forgive injuries and tendency toward irrational aggression. He presents Poggio's feud with Lorenzo Valla, still ongoing at the time of the March letter, as evidence.⁷⁷ Trebizond characterizes the dispute as a childish affair, and nineteenth-century accounts and recent studies have made similar assessments of Poggio's lack of restraint.⁷⁸ In a sign of the importance of audience in humanist contests, Trebizond appeals to the public Poggio-Valla dispute to denigrate Poggio. Such an appeal indicates how humanists read about, discussed, and even participated in each other's

⁷⁶ Ibid., 510. Spondeamus igitur ut paulo ante dixi aut quavis alia grandi sponsione, que victum aut omnino perdat aut miserum perpetue faciat. Ego mediusfidius antea et te et me saluum volebam. Nunc his tuis litteris quibus furor tuus in me magis aperitur, quam purgetur, sic accensus sum ut nihil magis optem quam ut hac conditione turpissimam alter nostrum obeat mortem. Falso me scripsisse ais ergo, hanc epistolam testor, si hanc conditionem non acceptaveris, daturum me operam et scribendo et dicendo ut omnes si fieri potest homicidam, te sicarium mendacem, impudentem, iniquum, furiosum, ingratum, asinum et sentiant et predicent. Hec ita scribo, quia equam conditionem tibi affero, falsa me scripsisse dicis.

⁷⁷ The Poggio-Valla feud took place in Rome, as both worked in the curia, until Poggio left in April 1453 to become the Florentine chancellor. Occurring between 1452 and 1453 the dispute was one of the most vitriolic of the fifteenth century. The standard account is still Salvatore Camporeale's biography of Valla, *Lorenzo Valla: Umanesimo e Teologia* (Florence, 1972). For his analysis from Poggio's perspective, see "Poggio Bracciolini versus Lorenzo Valla: The *Orationes in Laurentium Vallam*," in *Perspectives on Early Modern and Modern Intellectual History*, ed. Marino and Schlitt. For a shorter overview, see Ennio I. Rao, *Curmudgeons in High Dudgeon: 101 Years of Invectives (1352-1453)* (Messina: EDAS, 2007), 87-97. I examine Trebizond's accusations that the feud was childish in my analysis of masculinity in Chapter Four, page 191, and in Chapter Five I analyze the first of Poggio's four invectives against Valla.

⁷⁸ In the nineteenth century, John Addington Symonds described Poggio as a "fiery scholar" who "discharged his usual missile, a furious invective, against Valla" and added "nor did the quarrel end till he had added five of these disgusting compositions to his achievements in the same style, and had drawn a young Latinist of promise, Niccolo Perotti, into the disgraceful fray." John Addington Symonds, *Renaissance in Italy*, vol. 2, *The Revival of Learning* (London: Smith, Elder, 1897), 174-175. In his recent description of the dispute as the high-water mark of humanist invective, Ennio Rao describes how Poggio and Valla "had scoured the Latin language and exhausted it in their search for obscene words with which to hail down scorn upon one another." Rao, 96-97.

feuds.⁷⁹ The dispute was quite the *cause célèbre*, dividing humanists in and beyond Rome into camps supporting the two men, and Trebizond almost certainly understood the resonance his comments would have.⁸⁰ Poggio, he claims, had been rebuked by Valla and had become so enraged that he had resolved to end the man's life. Trebizond, describing himself as a confidant of Poggio's at that time, had urged him not to worry, counseling that a mind's greatness is perceived in neglecting—or forgetting—an offense rather than in seeking revenge. He had added that if Poggio was intent on responding, he ought to do so in writing. Since Valla had castigated him in writing, this would be a fair manner of reply. Trebizond had laid out both models of conflict resolution here, but Poggio, captive to his resentment, had chosen neither. He had protested instead that Valla ought to be pursued with the sword, not the pen.⁸¹ Trebizond recalls this conflict to express his concern that Poggio would do the same in their feud. He had written to Nicholas, he contends, because the pope's intervention had stopped Poggio from carrying out his plans against Valla, and he was hopeful that the same might be true for their current dispute.⁸²

⁷⁹ Likewise, in one of his invectives against Poggio, Valla mocks Poggio for being punched by Trebizond. His comment is another example of the public nature of humanist contests. See note 35.

⁸⁰ Camporeale, "Poggio," 29-30. Poggio wrote his first *Oratio* against Valla after one of Valla's students—Francesco Rossi—emended some of Poggio's works. Poggio blamed Valla for the affront, wrote to defend himself, and attacked the style of Valla's *Elegantiae*. Camporeale writes that "Poggio's move to Florence ended his direct confrontation with Valla. Yet it also spread the controversy to other humanist centers, and scholars from Naples to Venice joined the ranks of either 'poggiani' or 'laurenziani.'"

⁸¹ Cf. Poggio's 1454 letter to Tommasi, in which he calls for Valla to be whipped and imprisoned. See note 49.

⁸² Walser, 512-513. An credis forsan immemorem me esse adeo ut non meminerim quando in re puerili vere in multis a Valla fuisses repressus: ita te exarsisse ut vitam eius extinguere constitueris? Particeps ego tum ut amicus eram consiliorum tuorum et hortabar, ut nihil curares, quoniam magnitudo animi in negligendo non in ulciscendo perspicitur, vel si ulcisci velles scriptis id ageres. Equum esset si scriptis lesit ut scriptis ledatur; ferro cum illo esse agendum non calamo exclamabas. Deinde cum ad scribendum versus esses, laudabam te quod consilium mutasses. 'Quid tu ita me credis quasi puerum moneri,' cum indignatione respondisti. Iste papa, ex quo vita mea pendet, mihi iussit nequaquam tale facere audeam. Hac ergo de causa querelam ad pontificem detuli, ut et tuum ab insidiis animum et me a periculo liberarem.

Trebizond's recollection of the Valla feud leads him back to consideration of Poggio's self-control and a contrast between their respective characters. He claims that when he was threatened by Poggio—a reference to the assassination plot—he prayed that his opponent be granted a more upright mind. Poggio, on the other hand, responded by writing the February letter against him and circulating it publicly. Like Poggio, Trebizond clearly expressed anxiety about public attacks on his honor.⁸³ Trebizond frequently attributes Poggio's behavior to his emotions. A man cannot write in the manner Poggio has, he claims, unless he is without reason. Poggio's perturbations are made clear by the rage of his letters.⁸⁴ His resentment and the angry manner of his writing are evidence to Trebizond that Poggio lacks restraint. This is the note on which he ends his letter, turning to Poggio's assertion that offenses ought to be forgotten rather than avenged. Trebizond is incredulous and he counters by noting Poggio's well-known reputation for conflict.⁸⁵

Trebizond's account of Poggio's resentment demonstrates the centrality of the ideals of forgiveness and restraint to their dispute and suggests Trebizond's own difficulty upholding them. Like Poggio, he struggles to reconcile the need, in contesting honor, to vilify his opponent with the moral imperative to forgive, or at least to reply moderately. The act of writing the March letter is evidence. He had argued previously his

⁸³ Cf. Poggio's allegation that Trebizond fabricated the assassination plot to harm his reputation. See note 72.

⁸⁴ Walser, 513. *Vide differentiam animorum. Ita et prius ego tibi cum conditione minatus sum et deum oravi, ut rectiorem tibi animum largiatur, tu omni conditione sublata, quod vero mihi minaris in calce litteram scripsisti. Deinde opes tuas mihi iactas et cognatos et patriam in his temporibus ceteraque huiusmodi quasi vero ad insidias presertim privatas multarum magnarumque copiarum sit opus. Non videtur mihi possibile, Poggi sic posse quemquam loqui et maxime litteris deditum nisi duplici turbatione insaniat.*

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 514. *Quid quod precepta sapientum scribis et in aliis et in hoc te sequi, qui iubent oblivione potius iniurias quam manu aut viribus ulciscendas. Oblivione tu? oblivione tu? o deus bone, pugnum unum habuisti, omitto tua culpa, omitto subita commotione animi, que peccata multo leviora sunt. Sed pugno percussus sis ex premeditatione, ex insidiis, quantum ultionem acceperis, nemo est Rome qui nesciat.*

willingness to reconcile, but had added that Poggio had refused to reconcile except in the chancery. Poggio's February letter offered Trebizond another chance to choose forgiveness. He could have refrained from writing a second letter. Instead, he wrote a response far longer and more abrasive than Poggio's. He criticizes Poggio for insulting language, but his own insults are only thinly veiled. He claims that he refuses to heap insults, but then lists the insults he will not use: that Poggio is known and proclaimed to be a lying thief, murderer, impudent, unjust, mad, an ingrate, an ass, and more.⁸⁶ He likens Poggio to a child and describes his behavior during the Valla feud as childish. He is prone to exasperation. To Poggio's claim that his January letter was written impudently, Trebizond replies, "O poor me, because I do not present my throat to you, I write impudently and you claim I write lies."⁸⁷

On both counts, then, Trebizond, like Poggio, fails to uphold the ideals he praises. This is not to say that his criticisms of Poggio lack merit given the model of conflict resolution both men articulate. If the ideal is to forgive, Poggio should not have issued a response, as Trebizond argues and Poggio himself appears to understand. Likewise, Trebizond makes a fair case in concluding that Poggio's characterization of his letters as insolent and insulting was, by extension, a criticism of Trebizond himself. Poggio's letter frequently sounds condescending, as when he claims he did not know whether Trebizond was alive or dead. The issue is not whose violation of the norm is more egregious, but

⁸⁶ Ibid., 509-510. Non exclamabo hic O furem fradulentum, impudentem, stultum, amentem, mendacem, vecordem, ignorantem nec accumulabo alia ut tu soles, truncum, stipitem, asinum, lapidum, hec ceteraque similia: tibi relinquo ut in me dices. Nam me quidem pudet in alium hec dicere. Utrum vero actis et scriptis meis hec magis quam tuis conveniant aliorum iudicium sit et conscientie tue ac mee; Ibid., 510. Falso me scripsisse ais ergo...falsa me scripsisse dicis. See note 76.

⁸⁷ Walser, 510. Ais deinde: Tue littere satis impudenter scripte testuntur. O me miserum, quia iugulum tibi non prebeo, impudenter scribo, falsa me scribere dicis.

instead that they both violate for the same reason. Their ideal of forgiveness is difficult to reconcile with a professional imperative to contest honor.

The Forged Letter

Forgiveness plays an important role in the February and March 1453 letters, but also figures prominently in Trebizond's final letter about his relationship with Poggio, which he composed to his son Andreas in June 1454. Trebizond's letter outlines the most recent of Poggio's alleged plots. He accuses Poggio and his associate Giovanni Aurispa (1376-1459) of composing and circulating a letter to ruin his reputation and cause him to be imprisoned again. He claims that the letter, addressed from Mehmed II to Nicholas, was written insultingly but in such a manner that any Western reader would recognize that a Western writer, not the Turkish ruler, was the true author. Their hope, Trebizond contends, was that he would be blamed for having written the letter.⁸⁸ Nearly two years after the chancery fight, he continues to blame Poggio for his subsequent imprisonment and expulsion from the curia, and to proclaim his innocence in the fight itself. Here he combines a discussion of forgiveness, prudence, and honesty to reiterate his description of Poggio's cruelty and his assertions that Poggio continued—even to that day—to craft plots to ruin him.

Failed forgiveness serves as Trebizond's stated reason for writing to his son about the alleged forged letter plot. As in January 1453, Trebizond laments Poggio's treatment of him despite the substantial aid he had provided in the translations of Xenophon and Diodorus. He presents himself as undeserving of such treatment, casting

⁸⁸ For the letter to Andreas, see *Collectanea*, 117-124. Monfasani cites one Renaissance copy of the letter, the autograph. He preserves the orthographical inconsistencies including the spelling of *Poggio* as *Pogius*.

himself as a loyal servant of the curia. In an interesting moment of reflection, he admits that some will ask why he still protests Poggio's mistreatment two years later. He seems to recognize—like Poggio's earlier admission that it may be more honorable to not respond to the assassination charge—that his discussion of these old affairs exceeds the bounds of propriety. Trebizond justifies his letter as Poggio had rationalized his, by focusing on his opponent's resentment. He complains, Trebizond explains, because Poggio once again threatens him. As in his January 1453 letters to Nicholas V and Poggio, Trebizond accuses Poggio of a consistent pattern of dishonesty and abuse. Even with so much time having passed, he claims, Poggio's *insania*—the madness of an ungrateful and shameless man—had not ceased, but instead threatened Trebizond with a false crime and an extreme charge. A cruel mind, Trebizond adds, continues to contrive accusations, as it is accustomed to do, and it does not refrain from the most extreme measures to harm him.⁸⁹

Trebizond returns to a consideration of Poggio's character at the end of the letter, where he roots the reasons for his opponent's hostilities in his lack of rational self-control. It is perhaps the clearest articulation from Trebizond's Naples correspondence of

⁸⁹ *Collectanea*, 117. (1) Si unquam, fili carissime, patuit quam scelestus est ingratus animus, quam durus atque perniciosus, quam denique in bene meritos crudelis et pestifer, his quoque temporibus cuilibet meas recensenti fortunas planum aptumque esse potest. Nemo enim pene ignorat quot quantaque mea in Florentinum Poggium merita extiterint. Universa enim apostolica cancelleria testis est quotidianis laboribus meis tum Xenophonticam Cyri Disciplinam, tum Diodori Egyptiam Historiam e Greco in Latinum vel vertisse illum vel pervertisse: illud, quod institutionibus meis factum est, quantum fieri quinquennio spacio potuit; hoc, quia durum atque agrestem animum, ne in tam longo quidem temporis spacio, ad meliora reducere potui. (2) Nec fui unquam ignarus malam illi mentem, malum animum inesse, sed pape Nicolao quinto roganti atque adeo iubenti obtemperare volui. Non enim eram nescius tanto magis iubere principes quanto vehementius rogant, sperabamque si etiam Poggius per ingratitudinem aliquando in furorem verteretur, potestate tamen illius qui iussit innocentiam meam facile posse defendi. Quorsum hec? Aut quid tandem tibi vis, quispiam dicet, qui biennio iam transacto post illius in te furorem quereris? Queror, queror, inquam, fili, de fortunis nostris <non> quia tanto tempore illius ingrati atque improbi hominis insania non cessavit, sed quia certior est quovis falso in nos ficto crimine, indicta causa extrema nobis imminere pericula. Non potest atrox leniri animus, sed fingit, ut solet, crimina, nec summis parcat ut me solum capiat. For Trebizond's work with Poggio on these translations, see pages 109-111.

the relationship between emotion, action, and character. He blames Poggio's repeated attempts to ruin him on anger, which itself was a result of Poggio's shame regarding Trebizond's aid in the translations of Xenophon and Diodorus. To demonstrate this, he begins with a general discussion of the nature of ingratitude—drawn, it seems, from Xenophon and Diodorus—and then applies this to his relationship with Poggio.⁹⁰ When a naturally ungrateful individual, he writes, has substantial kindnesses conferred upon him, that individual struggles with the resulting obligation. The problem is bad enough if the debt is owed to someone of a higher status but completely unbearable if owed to someone of equal or lesser status.⁹¹ The ungrateful man can try to deny the obligation, but sometimes the kindness is so great it cannot be ignored or concealed. Believing his ingratitude to be public knowledge, he will come to regard his benefactor with hatred. The shame he feels regarding the debt will lead him to become more savage by the day

⁹⁰ Monfasani's apparatus does not note the classical references, but Trebizond's description of gratitude seems to come from Xenophon and Diodorus. In the *Cyropaedia*, Xenophon identifies ingratitude as the offense the Persians hate the most and notes "if they know that any one is able to return a favour and fails to do so, they punish him also severely. For they think that the ungrateful are likely to be most neglectful of their duty toward their gods, their parents, their country, and their friends; for it seems that shamelessness goes hand in hand with ingratitude; and it is that, we know, which leads the way to every moral wrong." Xen., *Cyr.* 1.2.7. The translation is Miller's. Xenophon, *Cyropaedia*, trans. Walter Miller (New York: G.P. Putnam, 1914). Xenophon's *Memorabilia* argues much the same—he who does not show gratitude for benefits received is ungrateful, ingratitude is an injustice—and adds that the greater the benefits one receives, the greater the injustice of not showing gratitude. Xen., *Mem.* 2.2. Diodorus likewise connects gratitude and virtue when describing the Egyptian practices associated with benefactions, and Egyptian treatment of benefactors. Diod., *Hist.* 1.70.5-6 and 1.90.2. I take Trebizond's description of gratitude, if drawn from Xenophon and Diodorus, as an implicit reminder of Poggio's debt to him.

⁹¹ *Collectanea*, 122. (26) Pogium vero quid vexat? Attende, queso. Nam opere precium est scire quibus rebus usque ad effundendum bene de se meriti hominis sanguinem ingratus animus incitatur. Multos certe fuisse huiusmodi homines historici narrant, et nos Pogium modo re ipsa cognovimus. (27) Sed causas breviter aperiamus ut facilius cavere possis, quamvis ipse aut non potuerim omnino effugere aut nesciverim qui hec non ignorabam. Tantum tamen mihi cavi ut adhuc vivam. Si ergo ad ingratitudinem magnitudo beneficii primo accedat, deinde talis collatio ut nullo pacto negari possit, hec tria, ingratitudo, magnitudo beneficii et aperta manifestaque collatio, si uno in animo coniunguntur, benemeriti homini sanguis semper, quousque uterque vivit, petetur si condicio etiam eius qui contulit minor aut equalis vel certe non multo maior sit quam eius in quem collatum beneficium est. Ingratitudo enim facit ut nequeat animus ferre alicui non nimium maiori, sed aut minori aut fere equali valde obligatus videri. The following two notes continue the argument.

until he becomes unable to consider anything other than ending his benefactor's life. By doing so, the ungrateful man believes he will no longer be subject to the debt, and his benefactor will no longer stand as a continued reminder of the obligation.⁹² His problem with Poggio, Trebizond argues, is the result of the man's ungrateful nature and the services he had done for him in the past.⁹³ He made Poggio famous, he declares, a man ignorant of Greek letters who he claims had composed nothing in Latin except some shameful stories and invectives.⁹⁴ In fact, Trebizond claims Poggio was so incapable of handling Greek that he had to feed Poggio individual words as he would a child. For

⁹² Ibid., 122-123. (28) Magnitudo autem meriti nimium obligatum reddit. Quare si tantum est beneficium ut non possit quasi minimum flocci pendi, nullum ingrato refugium relinquitur nisi negatio. Ubi hoc ille mihi? Aut quando? Quod si res etiam sic manifesta est ut nullus celandi sit locus, tunc ingratus. Quousque vivit ille qui bene de se meritus est, imaginem quamdam ingratitude sue, et quidem vivam atque loquentem circumferri arbitratur. Et ita omnes qui benefactorem suum oculis cernant, de ingratitude sua loqui opinatur creditque subiectum se nimium esse obligatumque ei quem odio propter ingratitude animi maximo habeat. (29) Hanc tantam ignominiam (summam enim putat minori aut equali nimium obligari) cum fugere cupiat, atrocior in dies fit, nec aliud crudelis eius animus cogitare potest quam quomodo vitam bene de se meriti eripiat. Hoc enim solummodo pacto nemini se subiectum putat, si nemo vivat cui debeat. A vita enim benefactoris turpitudinem ingratitude sue predicari estimat. Nolo hic exempla priscorum congerere ne historiam contexere videar. Multa possem narrare que nostra memoria acciderunt; sed vereor ne aliquos ledam. Satis mihi res ipsa per se facit. (30) Nemo enim est qui nescit ingratos, cum impune possint, bene de se meritos ad interitum usque persequi, presertim si magnitudo beneficii et manifesta, ut diximus, collatio concurrerint.

⁹³ Ibid., 123. (30) Quid autem maius excogitari potest quam quod nos opera nostra Poggio contulimus? Ignarum litterarum Grecarum hominem qui nihil Latine preter turpissimas conscripserat fabulas et invectivas quasdam, quo quasi ad sentinam omnium turpium verborum que melius re ipsa quam vocabulis novit multitudinem congegit, perpetuum nostris laboribus fecimus. Unde non parvam quoque pecuniam et gratiam consecutus videtur. (31) Opera nostra et labore quinquennio pene sic abusus est, ut omnis id Romana curia sciat, ne ipse quidem summus pontifex ignoret, primo Xenophontis Pediam Cyri pervertisse illum, deinde Diodori Egyptiacam historiam, singula nobis verba illi sicuti puero ingerentibus. Is impunitatem malefactorum suorum nactus quiescet? Iusticia, credo, animique modestia movebitur. Estne hodie usquam iusticia, ubi timor non sit? Priscis etiam temporibus, quot tu mihi recensebis iustos fuisse, qui nullo timore id facerent? Perpauci, perpauci, inquam, iusti propter ipsum equum et bonum sunt sed alii dedecus et infamiam, alii poenas timent, non nulli utrumque. Invidi autem nostri omnem semper in nos peregrinos et habuerunt et habebunt impunitatem. Decus vero esse putant non servare inopem atque peregrinum, sed opprimere atque conculcare. Illud enim deiecti, hoc magni animi opinantur.

⁹⁴ The "shameful stories" are Poggio's *Facetiae*, jokes and anecdotes Poggio purportedly collected from his curial colleagues. Though some, including Trebizond here, criticized the *Facetiae* as vulgar, Poggio's work was extremely popular. Greenblatt, *The Swerve*, 142-144. Trebizond's reference to Poggio's Latin invectives is a gesture to Poggio's reputation as a polemicist. Trebizond had already, in March 1453, attempted to make use of Poggio's feud with Valla, but Poggio clashed with other humanists as well. He had a well-known feud with Francesco Filelfo, against whom he composed four invectives, during the 1430s in Florence. See Rao, 53-75.

nearly five years, he laments to Andreas, his work had been squandered, and he had received neither money nor thanks in return. All the features of Trebizond's prior characterizations of Poggio are evident here. The man's character led him to yield to his emotions—shame and anger—which manifested themselves as plots against his benefactor.

Trebizond's reiteration of Poggio's cruel nature and resentment frames his account of the forged letter plot. Poggio's cruel mind could not be mollified and he was unable to control his emotions. His plotting is a sign of resentment indicating his inability either to forget offenses or to respond moderately. His willingness to wage a dispute by means of deceit and dishonest actions signifies his failed restraint. Poggio, he tells Andreas, had heard of Trebizond's plans to return to Nicholas's service and composed the forged letter so that when he returned, he would be imprisoned once again.⁹⁵ Trebizond situates this new plot in a pattern of abuse, noting it would not be the first time that Poggio would have succeeded with his deceit and managed to have him imprisoned without a hearing.⁹⁶ The plot required that the letters be circulated so that Trebizond

⁹⁵ *Collectanea*, 117-118. (3) Nam cum audisset redeundi Romam mihi animum esse, nec verisimile aliquid posset excogitare quo me neci traderet, vide quo eius prorumpit improbitas! Litteras sane turpes summo pontifici nefandaeque contumelie plenas quasi a rege Turcorum ad pontificem ipsum missas composuit. Eas sic conscripsit ut nemo sit mentis compos qui non intelligat non ab illo rege, sed a Christiano aliquo fuisse confictas. Quare sic? Ut, cum vi litterarum et sensu fecte non vere Turchi littere videantur, in Georgium id totum inferat crimen. Quod ita esse illi et hac ratione factum ante oculos ponam si ordine per quedam capita quasi per limites pergam. (4) Veritati enim omnia, ut ait Aristoteles, consonant; falso autem cito dissonat verum. Tria ergo mihi docenda confirmandaque sunt: primum, quod huiusmodi littere non sunt a rege Turcorum conscripte; alterum, quod Pogius scripsit et Iohannes Aurispa edidit; tertium, quod hec omnia, ut ipse opprimar, conficta sunt.

⁹⁶ Trebizond refers to his imprisonment without a trial after the chancery fight. See pages 118-121. *Collectanea*, 120. (15) Ut cum omnes intelligant qui eas legunt non esse a rege Turcorum conscriptas, Georgius, qui Neapoli habitat, scripsisse criminaretur, et indicta causa vel furca vel perpetuis vinculis damnaretur. (16) Unde id patet? Coniecerunt me biennio antea Aurispa et Pogius in vincula et quidem indicta causa. Liberatus ad optimum omnium regum Alfonsum Neapolim profugi. Redii Romam post decem et octo mensibus ad pedes summi pontificis, cui iubenti ut ad servitium redirem suum spem dedi si prospere hic negocia mea procederent, ad mensem Martium rediturum. Id Rome publicum fuisse scio. Nec enim omnino ignotus sum. Pogius deinde scripsit Turquicas huiusmodi litteras, et Aurispa edidit. Quando?

could reasonably be blamed for their authorship. Poggio and Aurispa conspired to make it seem as if the letter had come from Constantinople to Noto, a city in Sicily. Trebizond explains that he had hosted a student from Noto for the better part of a year, and that Aurispa and Poggio intended that connection to allow the letter to be traced back to him.⁹⁷ Trebizond's description of the plot is an elaborate unraveling of the motives of his alleged assailants. He presents it as another in a long list of Poggio's hostilities, whose animosity was the result of his ungrateful character. Even two years after the fight, Poggio continued to fabricate lies.⁹⁸

Ultimately, as Trebizond tells Andreas, the forged letter plot failed because Trebizond was in Rome when he was alleged to have sent the letter from Naples to Rome. The case was rejected, and the claims against him declared fraudulent.⁹⁹ Still, he

Eodem ipso tempore quo ego Rome expectabar? Cur? Ut si Romam venissem, quod illi omnino credebant, statim accusatus in vincula raperer. Nec dubitabant posse hoc se calumnia id facere, qui iam bis fallaciis me suis indicta causa oppresserunt: primum, quando irruentem in me Pogium manu repuli; deinde, cum me secretariatu privassent.

⁹⁷ *Collectanea*, 121. (20) Idcirco nunc Noto Romam et Roma Neapolim littere fide volat ut ego, qui Neapoli sum quique Leonardum Notensem annum domi tenui, scripsisse videar. Non enim poterit vere dicere ideo misisse Neapolim, quoniam edere ipsas cupiebat. Nam si publicas facere voluisset, in apostolica cancellaria certe edidisset. Nullus enim est locus illo celebrior, nullus accommodatior editioni litterarum. Ab omnibus Europe partibus homines ibi, et quidem clari, adsunt qui litteras illico singuli ad patriam mitterent suam. Si edere igitur cupiebat, cur in cancellaria apostolica, vel cur omnino Rome non edidit? Quia editionem hanc tunc fieri ad opprimendum Georgium opus erat quando ipse adesset Rome; Ibid., 121. (22) Id enim maxime considerandum est cur fecit. Quia summopere fictioni sue ac oppressioni Georgii conveniebat ut littere he a Neapoli, ubi Georgius moram trahit, alio tran<s>funderentur, et sic turpium in pontificem litterarum conscriptio in Georgium redundaret. Sed sunt etiam alii in Neapoli, quispiam dicet, qui scripsisse potuissent; quare non omnino ad te posset culpa impingi. Hec profecto ratio Aurispam induxit ut primum originem litterarum Notensem fecerit, ubi nec aliquis est qui eas posset componere, et quo misisse Notensis Leonardus, qui mecum erat, aperte videri poterat.

⁹⁸ Ibid., 122. (25) Illud non pretermittam nequis miretur cur Aurispa nunquam a me lacesitus, Pogius vero summis etiam meis ornatus meritis, ita me prosecuntur ut expleri nequeant. In vincula me suis artibus intruserunt, ex apostolica cancellaria eiecerunt, fortunas nostras diripi Rome fecerunt, Neapolin usque siccarios ad occidendum me miserunt. Et nunc, si Romam venissem, non dubito quin in perpetua me vincula per litteras Turci fictas coniecissent. Cur igitur adeo furunt ut nullum preter figuram servent hominis vestigium? Aurispam nulla re alia magis moveri credo quam invidia in me primum, deinde affinitate mutua qua Poggio semper fuisse coniunctum constat.

ends his letter by warning his son of his enemies' continued animosity and the danger they pose to the entire family. The warning comes just after one of Trebizond's complaints about Poggio's ingratitude, and interestingly Trebizond even refers to his own status as an immigrant. He suggests that Poggio had "obtained impunity for his crimes" and laments the abuse of foreigners: "Our enemies, however, have always had and will always have total impunity against us foreigners. In truth, they think it dignified not to look after the needy and the foreigner, but to oppress and trample him." Trebizond amplifies his portrayal of Poggio's ingratitude with an accusation characterizing him as an abuser of foreigners and suggests that such abuse was common and accepted in Italy.¹⁰⁰ He urges Andreas, who still worked in the curia as a scribe, to leave Rome before the rage of his father's enemies turned against him. Trebizond's reference to his Greek origins is notable because it is one of only two such references he makes during his dispute with Poggio.¹⁰¹ Here though, his background functions in a concise summation of

⁹⁹ Ibid., 121-122. (24) Nolo rem verbis ampliore reddere. Satis ipsa per se ipsam intelligenti faciet, presertim cum usque a mense Octobri, quando ipse Rome fui, hanc fallaciam incusserint. Cardinalis enim, scio quis et quidem in consistorio, litteras a me accepisse retulit a Turcorum rege ad summum pontificem scriptas. Sed reiecta res fuit quoniam hinc me Romam misisse illis diebus affirmabat quibus ego Rome eram. Id mihi cardinalis, vir omni virtutis numero excellens, Romane curie decus et dignitate cardinalatus, que summo sacerdotio proxima est, dignissimus, cum risu simul et indignatione narravit.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 123. (31) Is [Poggio] impunitatem maleficiorum suorum nactus quiescet?...Invidi autem nostri omnem semper in nos peregrinos et habuerunt et habebunt impunitatem. Decus vero esse putant non servare inopem atque peregrinum, sed opprimere atque conculcare. Illud enim deieci, hoc magni animi opinantur. (32) Latius hec scripsi, quoniam, ut re ipsa video, nimium te delectat habitatio Romana. Alter iam annus exactus est ex quo solus istic habitas sine tuis. Timeo ne inimici mei, cum rescierint previdisse me insidias suas, nec animum ignorare, ideoque istuc nec rediisse nec rediturum, timeo, inquam, ne in te omnem suum vertant furorem. Quid facis? Eia age. Rumpe moras. Nec natus nec educatus Rome fuisti. Non sumus omnino peregrini quando simul sumus. Malis pauper vivere cum tuis quam vitam cum alienis dives trahere. For the preceding complaint regarding Trebizond's aid to Poggio, see note 93.

¹⁰¹ Trebizond also referred to himself as a *peregrinus* to Nicholas in January 1453. He expressed concern that others—specifically Jacob Cremonensis—were claiming credit for his translation work: "For these reasons, therefore, I yielded freely to Poggio, especially since I would be a foreigner [*peregrinus*] no less in Rome than here [Naples]..." Walser, 505. See note 46.

Trebizond's complaint suggests that he perceived, or at least found it rhetorically useful to allege, a status difference between himself and Poggio rooted in his Greek background. I suspect the

his overall depiction of Poggio. With that, Trebizond's reflection on the chancery fight comes to an end. His final word on his relationship with Poggio is another attempt to cast his opponent as an individual who, in failing to forgive, in demonstrating imprudence, and in his consistent contrivance of plots and deceptions, utterly lacked restraint.

Conclusion

In April 1455, nearly three years after the chancery fight with Poggio, Trebizond returned to Rome and the curia. Nicholas V had died the previous month. The election of Calixtus III offered Trebizond the chance to come back to Rome, which he did just twelve days after the papal election. Many of his old colleagues had left the curia—including Poggio—and Trebizond returned to his post of apostolic secretary and began teaching publicly again.¹⁰² By that time, Trebizond and Poggio had put their feud behind them.

One of the purposes of the present analysis has been to examine the language and oppositional categories that humanists used in contests of honor. The Trebizond-Poggio dispute was undoubtedly such a contest. For Trebizond, it represented a crisis. Ousted from the chancery, he spent the next few years trying to vindicate his behavior during the chancery fight and discredit Poggio. Poggio, for his part, characterized Trebizond's accusations as slander intended to engender ill-will and harm Poggio's reputation. The

passage is in part an outgrowth of Trebizond's financial situation during his time in Naples. Monfasani explains how, despite having achieved financial success in Rome, once in Naples Trebizond's finances began to suffer. His economic hardships were the result of bad business decisions and, according to Trebizond himself, disreputable bankers. For Trebizond's finances, see Monfasani, *George of Trebizond*, 114-115. Additionally, if Trebizond felt like he was not getting enough respect for his translations, which was a popular task for Greek émigrés, he may have sincerely felt his status as a foreigner affecting him negatively.

¹⁰² Monfasani, *George of Trebizond*, 137-140. Monfasani notes there is no evidence that Trebizond actually ever resigned his post as secretary or was officially removed from it.

dispute is an excellent example of how humanists contested honor by fashioning presentations of themselves and of their opponents. Both men demonstrated an active engagement in the framing of their identities, and each expressed an anxiety about and sought to shape public opinion regarding their respective behaviors. The letters of each indicate concern about their identities, particularly in how lies could negatively impact public perception. In response to their anxiety, they mobilized a language of restraint to defend themselves and to vilify their opponent. Their discussions of prudence, honesty, and forgiveness were related to one another through a common motif: a cultural ideal emphasizing restraint, the rational self-control of one's emotions.

The preceding analysis contributes to a richer knowledge of humanist modes of expression, but can also modify the current understanding of the Trebizond-Poggio dispute and modern characterizations of Trebizond himself. During his own lifetime Trebizond had a reputation for being difficult. Although admitting that Trebizond was "somehow fair," Lorenzo Valla described him as bitter and morose. Trebizond's reputation has not improved with time. Monfasani offers a softer appraisal, noting that his opponents were the aggressors in many of his feuds, but subsequent scholarship has retained much of the negative assessment of his character.¹⁰³ Stephen Greenblatt, for example, characterizes Trebizond as "notoriously morose," angry, bitter, and resentful. None of this is necessarily incorrect, but it offers only a partial picture of Trebizond's experiences and of humanist culture. Trebizond's Naples correspondence was undoubtedly angry in tone and more than a little resentful, but not without, at least in his mind, good reason. He had lost his privileged position in Rome and had to leave for Naples. Alfonso's patronage was hardly insignificant, but the chancery fight was a

¹⁰³ Ibid., 104.

considerable blow to his reputation. Moreover, current scholarship now knows enough about the pressures involved with fifteenth-century professional life, particularly in the curia, to normalize at least somewhat Trebizond's resentment. The correspondence between the two men suggests this as well. They both articulated their anxiety about public perception, and both indicated a sense of self developed in the court of public opinion. Trebizond was no different from Poggio in his anxiety about reputation. The difference between the two, and likely what allowed Poggio to avoid seeming bitter and resentful here, is that Trebizond had lost more as a result of their fight than Poggio had.

Beyond this, both men waged their dispute by means of a shared concept of restraint. It is difficult to be too critical of Trebizond when his methods were so similar to those of his opponent. That is not to say that the two men were completely alike in their approaches. Poggio was not wrong when he argued that Trebizond had a habit of writing too insultingly against his opponents. He does write insultingly, and is unable to abide by the same principles of forgiveness that he espouses in his March 1453 letter. For his part, Poggio engages with Trebizond on the broader issues of reason and restraint but does not issue the same quantity or kinds of explicit criticisms or insults. It was all too common for fifteenth-century humanists to lament the lies and hostility that came with being a professional scholar, particularly in the curia. Trebizond was quite like his contemporaries in this regard, Poggio included. His major problem was that he was less successful at expressing himself during this feud in a culturally accepted manner. His letters reflect the tension between humanist ideals, particularly regarding moderate language and forgiveness, and the realities of an agonistic community devoted to contesting honor. As Poggio noted in 1437, insults and abuse are typically not well

accepted but are instead scorned, and tend to “render our cases less commendable.”

Trebizond seems not to have taken that lesson to heart.

Having examined separately Trebizond’s feuds with Guarino and Poggio—one early in his career as he sought to establish a reputation, the other later in his career after having achieved financial success and renown—the next chapter analyzes these two disputes together. The quarrels with Guarino and Poggio were waged under different circumstances and the terms of those debates differed accordingly, resulting in one conflict revolving around anti-Greek biases and the other around concepts of restraint. Nonetheless, there were certain similarities in the strategies employed during these distinctive encounters. Chapter Four focuses on one of these similarities, the use of concepts of manhood in acts of self-presentation and, alternatively, denigration.

CHAPTER FOUR

CONSTRUCTING THE MAN: MASCULINITY IN CONTESTS OF HONOR

Introduction

The previous two chapters have examined the roles that anti-Greek language and the concept of rational self-control played in the verbal strategies used during George of Trebizond's feuds with Guarino of Verona and Poggio Bracciolini. The present chapter examines a third theme in these feuds: masculinity. The invective in both feuds makes frequent reference to manhood. As in the preceding chapters, the present analysis addresses how the language and concepts humanists used functioned in the acts of self-presentation characteristic of contests of honor. During Trebizond's feuds with Guarino and Poggio, each author uses concepts related to masculinity to praise himself and vilify his opponent. Authors cast themselves as the ideal man—rational, learned, and moderate—and their opponents as unmanly, accusing them of childish, womanly, or beast-like behavior. The current analysis revisits events and texts addressed in previous chapters, but does so in new ways to explore additional themes that characterized Trebizond's feuds with Guarino and Poggio.

As an examination of the humanist concept of manhood, this chapter makes two main arguments. First, humanists derived their understanding of manhood from classical and medieval antecedents, and so understood reason as the identifying quality of manhood. Second, Trebizond and his contemporaries used gendered language to verbally emasculate their opponents in the public eye. As discussed in previous chapters, humanist contests of honor were public affairs. Insults, including slurs on a rival's manhood,

spread by means of invectives and letters that passed hand to hand, from friend to friend, and circulated through and between different cities. Friends, enemies, colleagues, and patrons were read about, gossiped about, and sometimes took part in these quarrels. Emasculation happened not just in the mind of the individual voicing the insult or of the person slandered, but in public perception.

The first goal of the present chapter is to demonstrate that humanist concepts of manhood were predicated on the use of reason. The invective in Trebizond's feuds illustrates how one had to be learned, knowledgeable, and skilled on the one hand and moderate, prudent, and restrained on the other to be considered truly manly. Trebizond and his opponents frequently contrasted manhood and reason with failed manhood and ignorance or irrationality. They did not use the phrase "failed manhood," of course, but described those who lived up to the ideal of a fully rational manhood as masculine and those who failed to do so as something other than masculine. Humanists followed classical and medieval models in understanding there to be a connection between reason and manhood.

The categories of failed masculinity involved groups deemed to be not fully rational and included, but were not limited to, those whose behavior was disparaged as womanish, as when Trebizond accused Poggio of fleeing during their chancery fight "like a Florentine woman in flight." Although discussions of early modern masculinity have largely examined the construction of masculinity in contrast to femininity, the individuals in the feuds considered here were far more likely to use other categories in defining manhood.¹ Agaso and Trebizond used beast or monster images (asses, fish, wolves; the

¹ Christopher S. Celenza, *The Lost Italian Renaissance: Humanists, Historians, and Latin's Legacy* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004), 121. Celenza's chapter on reputation is a fine example

Charybdis) more often than they used feminizing imagery. Trebizond and Poggio were more likely to cast each other as children than as women. Trebizond and his opponents also frequently used multiple, overlapping characterizations of failed masculinity, as when depicting an opponent's beast-like behavior as childish. Both labels drew distinctions between masculinity and failed masculinity to illustrate one's own honor and denigrate an opponent. These disputes reveal that there were many ways to use masculinity in crafting presentations of others.

The second goal of this analysis is to demonstrate that the purpose of using gendered language was to verbally emasculate an opponent, by which I mean to rob him of his masculine identity and impose upon him an alternative identity conceived of as not fully or truly masculine. For humanists this was a problem of definitions that reflected the role that the audience of their fellow scholars and patrons played. As the previous chapters have examined, humanist honor was won, lost, and contested in a public forum wherein contemporaries rendered judgments about an individual's learning and conduct and verdicts concerning conflicts between scholars. The public forum to which scholars appealed extended beyond the recipients of individual invectives and letters, and to the friends and colleagues of those individuals who, as texts were copied and circulated, heard and read about particular contests.² Humanists understood manhood, like other aspects of their identities, as publicly negotiated and contested. Emasculation, then, was a verbal strategy on the part of the attacker to reorder public perception and define his

of applying gender studies to a consideration of humanist honor. His analysis centers on the feminizing antitype. Examples of additional studies examining masculinity and femininity include the works by Pitkin, Milligan, and Finucci in note 6 and the collection edited by Milligan and Tylus.

² The composition, presentation, and circulation of the letters for Trebizond's feuds with Guarino and Poggio has been discussed in the previous chapters. For a discussion of the public nature of the Trebizond-Guarino correspondence, see Chapter Two, note 2. For the letters of the Trebizond-Poggio quarrel, see Chapter Three, note 1. For the public aspects of the feud, see Chapter Three, pages 135-136.

opponent. It was a gesture that could succeed or fail based on how a broader audience received it. Emasculation is certainly a provocative way of describing what was at stake in these texts, but humanist invective was itself provocative. Challenges to masculinity need not always entail an intended annihilation of the opponent's masculine status, of course. Challenges to masculinity ranged from mild censures of inappropriate, childish behavior to allegations that an opponent's cruelty and savagery indicated a sub-human—that is, brutish or beast-like—character. Regardless of the level of challenge, the concept of failed masculinity, with whatever oppositional categories and to whatever extent it was expressed, was intended to sway the author's audience and thus deprive his opponent of his masculinity in whole or in part.

As a verbal strategy, emasculation was intended to shame a rival and cast into doubt his credibility as a professional. Fundamental to this strategy is the implicit assumption of a hierarchy, at the top of which, above the various types of failed masculinity, stood the ideal, the man. Trebizond and his opponents negotiated this hierarchy in two main ways, each of which emphasized the opponent's failed exercise of reason. The first was by attacking an adversary's knowledge and capability as a scholar and teacher. The second was by attacking a foe's moral conduct. In the first case, humanists presented themselves as having the intellectual capacities of an adult man with a robust and polished understanding of complex subjects. In contrast, they characterized their opponent's level of learning as childish, womanish, or brutish. The implication of this was that an opponent's learning was rudimentary at best and far more often unpolished and crude. In the second case, humanists depicted their own moral rectitude, suitable to a true man, as a function of greater reason and restraint. They described the

real man, whose behavior was guided by reason, as prudent, honest, and moderate, and their opponents as failed men whose lack of emotional control led them to imprudent, dishonest, and immoderate behavior. Attacking an opponent in either of these two ways stripped him of reason and emasculated him. It also allowed a writer to assert his own masculinity and reason.

An examination of masculinity in Trebizond's feuds with Guarino and Poggio advances scholarship about early modern humanism in two ways. The first is by indicating how humanists conceived of masculinity. Studies of early modern masculinity are relatively few compared to the situation in medieval studies, although this scarcity has begun to change in the last fifteen years.³ Ruth Mazzo Karras and Derek G. Neal have addressed concepts of masculinity in the late medieval period, roughly contemporaneous with the early Quattrocento.⁴ A number of studies emerging out of New Historicist interest in self-fashioning have examined masculinity in England. They have considered the construction of masculinity and the pressure men felt—often termed “anxious masculinity”—to prove their manhood to others.⁵ Studies of Italian masculinity have been less numerous. The best received of these is Valeria Finucci's *The Manly Masquerade*, which examines how concepts of manhood were tied to paternity during the

³ On this disparity, see Celenza, 115-121; Todd W. Reeser, *Moderating Masculinity in Early Modern Culture* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006), 11-15.

⁴ Ruth Mazzo Karras, *From Boys to Men: Formations of Masculinity in Late Medieval Europe* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003); Derek G. Neal, *The Masculine Self in Late Medieval England* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008).

⁵ For example Mark Breitenberg, *Anxious Masculinity in Early Modern England* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996); Michael Carl Schoenfeldt, *Bodies and Selves in Early Modern England: Physiology and Inwardness in Spenser, Shakespeare, Herbert, and Milton* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999); Bruce R. Smith, *Shakespeare and Masculinity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000); Jennifer C. Vaught, *Masculinity and Emotion in Early Modern English Literature* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2008).

Italian Renaissance.⁶ To a reader of the correspondence in Trebizond's feuds, the relative inattention to early modern masculinity, especially humanist masculinity, is surprising given how gendered the language was that Trebizond and his competitors used. The present chapter contributes to studies of early modern masculinity by focusing on humanists, a category of individuals whose concept of manhood has thus far received little attention.

A second contribution this analysis makes is to a richer understanding of humanist experiences. Understanding the frequent references to manhood in these letters means understanding some of the significant verbal strategies humanists used and better understanding humanist texts. As Christopher Celenza has noted, studies of Renaissance intellectuals have largely neglected social factors, including gender. He adds that gender studies allow us to understand better Renaissance texts and authors, and an examination of Trebizond's feuds with Guarino and Poggio confirms his observation. A consideration of humanist masculinity also allows us to bring humanist experiences into line with existing studies of early modern masculinity. Trebizond and his correspondents understood masculinity as their medieval and early modern peers did, as an aspect of identity that was constructed and contested through interpersonal relationships. Insults about manhood could be effective because humanists perceived masculinity as something

⁶ Valeria Finucci, *The Manly Masquerade: Masculinity, Paternity, and Castration in the Italian Renaissance* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003). See also Michael Rocke, "Gender and Sexual Culture in Renaissance Italy," in *Gender and Society in Renaissance Italy*, ed. Judith C. Brown and Robert C. Davis (New York: Longman, 1998), 150-170. There are some interesting studies on masculinity and Machiavelli as well, including Hanna Fenichel Pitkin, *Fortune is a Woman: Gender and Politics in the Thought of Niccolò Machiavelli* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984) and Gerry Milligan, "Masculinity and Machiavelli: How a Prince Should Avoid Effeminacy, Perform Manliness and Be Wary of the Author," in *Seeking Real Truths: Multidisciplinary Perspectives on Machiavelli*, ed. Patricia Vilches and Gerald E. Seaman (Boston: Brill, 2007), 149-172. Milligan has also co-edited a collection of essays on masculinity with Jane Tylus, *The Poetics of Masculinity in Early Modern Italy and Spain* (Toronto: Centre for Reformation and Renaissance Studies, 2010). For an overview of anxious masculinity, see *Sex Before Sexuality: A Premodern History*, ed. Kim M. Phillips and Barry Reay (Malden, MA: Polity, 2011), 6.

that could be contested, gained, lost, and regained, just like other aspects of one's reputation. The result was an identifiable anxiety about how one's manliness was presented to and perceived by others, which suggests this correspondence can contribute to existing studies of "anxious masculinity." Even as Trebizond, Agaso, and Poggio characterized each other as childish, brutish, or womanish, they articulated distress that their opponent was challenging their own manhood and worked hard to demonstrate their manliness in response.

The following analysis is divided into two main sections according to the primary avenues of attack used by Trebizond and his competitors. The first half examines masculinity in insults about an opponent's knowledge and learning. These insults are especially prevalent in the Trebizond-Guarino feud, which serves as the focal point of this section but are also evident in the Trebizond-Poggio conflict. The second half addresses masculinity and allegations about immoral conduct. Concepts of moral rectitude sat at the center of the Trebizond-Poggio dispute because of their chancery fight. That feud is the focus of the second half of this analysis, which then addresses conduct in the Trebizond-Guarino feud. Each half examines how language of failed masculinity—including childish, womanish, or beast-like imagery—functioned in these two different kinds of attacks. I begin, however, with a discussion of the classical models from which humanists drew when they discussed what it meant to be a man.

Reason and Manhood

In adopting verbal emasculation as a strategy for contests of honor, humanists situated themselves in a tradition considering reason to be the identifying quality of manhood. Erudite fifteenth-century scholars followed Greco-Roman and medieval

precedents in linking maleness with reason and excluding others, including women, children, and animals, from the category of those possessing the full capacity for reasoning. This tradition had roots in Aristotelian thought. The *De anima* identified three kinds of soul, the vegetative, sensitive, and rational, and specified that only humans possessed the rational soul and therefore the capacity for reason.⁷ The *Politics* argued that although men, women, and children all possessed the rational soul, they did so in different ways: “For the slave has no deliberative faculty at all; the woman has, but it is without authority, and the child has, but it is immature.”⁸ The difference between man and woman or child was the fully actualized capacity for reason present in men but lacking in others. The Aristotelian model posited man as the perfect human and women and children as imperfect, a distinction made implicitly or explicitly in other works. In the *Nichomachean Ethics*, Aristotle defined the function of humans as rational activity in pursuit of the good. True virtue depended on the exercise of reason, and since women were not considered fully rational, the implication seems to be that they were unable to attain true virtue or the fully human good.⁹ In the *Rhetoric*, Aristotle describes youths as captive to their emotions and desires, impulsive, and immoderate.¹⁰

Roman and medieval authors maintained the link between reason and manhood. In the *De officiis*, Cicero, like Aristotle, distinguishes man from beast by virtue of reason.

⁷ Arist., *De an.* 413a20-25.

⁸ Arist., *Pol.* 1.13.

⁹ Arist., *Eth. Nic.* 1098a 1-18 and 1178a 6-8. See Ruth Groenhout, “The Virtue of Care: Aristotelian Ethics and Contemporary Ethics of Care,” in *Feminist Interpretations of Aristotle*, ed. Cynthia A. Freeland (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1998), 174.

¹⁰ Arist., *Rh.* 2.12.

For Cicero, man is the only animal with a sense of propriety and moderation.¹¹ Cicero too differentiates men from youths and casts the young as devoted to the senses and the passions. He emphasizes the importance of moderation through the exercise of reason and identifies restraint as a marker of manhood.¹² The Aristotelian model influenced scholastic figures such as William of Moerbeke, who translated the *De anima*, and Thomas Aquinas, who wrote a commentary on William's translation. In his commentary on Aristotle's *Politics*, Aquinas follows Aristotle's contrast between human slaves and irrational animals, noting that although slaves lack sufficient reason to participate in deliberation they do not completely lack reason as animals do.¹³ He follows Aristotle as well in his *Summa theologiae* arguing the reasoning capabilities of women and children to be defective, as when he lists children and women among those groups whose testimony is problematic.¹⁴ Additionally, in discussing sobriety he remarks that the desire for pleasure thrives in the young and that women lack the ability to resist desire.¹⁵

Early modern scholars adopted the classical model linking manhood and reason and excluding animals, women, and children from the ranks of those with full rationality. The distinction between human and animal has been the focus of a growing number of recent studies of Renaissance beasts. The central figure in this field is Erica Fudge, who examines how animals featured in debates about reason in seventeenth-century

¹¹ Cic., *Off.* 1.11 and 1.14.

¹² Cic., *Off.* 1.106 and 1.122; Cic., *Sen.* 11.36 and 12.39-40.

¹³ Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on Aristotle's Politics*, trans. Richard J. Regan (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett, 2007): 1.3.11.

¹⁴ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, II, q.70, a.3; *Ibid.*, I, q.92, a.1 and a.1 reply 2; Aquinas, *Commentary*, 1.3.4-5.

¹⁵ Aquinas, ST, II, q.149, a.4.

England.¹⁶ She argues that beasts served as an “other” against which Renaissance individuals judged human status and that the Renaissance conception of beasts reveals the fragility of human status. She identifies classical antecedents to early modern ideas, including Aristotle’s identification of the vegetative, sensitive, and rational souls.¹⁷ The concern, Fudge explains, was that if humanity was predicated on the exercise of reason—a faculty that distinguished human from beast—then the lack of reason and the undue influence of the passions could essentially transform a human into a beast. For the authors Fudge studies, cruelty—a vice Trebizond consistently ascribes to Poggio—“reveals the frailty of human reason; cruelty makes a human like a beast.”¹⁸ Others also examine the consequences of this notion. Kathryn Perry’s study of seventeenth-century invective addresses how anxiety about the boundary between human and animal provided structure to formal invective featuring “abusive animal epithets.” Anxiety could be heightened, James Knowles argues, where particular animals such as apes were concerned. Apes, he explains, “raised questions about the boundaries of the human and animal, a highly uncertain and contested limen.”¹⁹ The early modern concept of beasts provoked considerable anxiety. Fudge notes how the animal became “a symbol of all that humans should not be” and she argues that humanity was “a status achieved not merely

¹⁶ Erica Fudge, *Perceiving Animals: Humans and Beasts in Early Modern Culture* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2002); *Renaissance Beasts: Of Animals, Humans, and Other Wonderful Creatures*, ed. Fudge (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2004); Fudge, *Brutal Reasoning: Animals, Rationality, and Humanity in Early Modern England* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2006). See also Steve Baker, *Picturing the Beast: Animals, Identity, and Representation* (New York: Manchester University Press, 1993).

¹⁷ Fudge, *Brutal Reasoning*, 8-10.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 68.

¹⁹ Kathryn Perry, “Unpicking the Seam: Talking Animals and Reader Pleasure in Early Modern Satire,” in *Renaissance Beasts*, ed. Fudge, 19-36; James Knowles, ““Can ye not tell a man from a marmoset?”: Apes and Others on the Early Modern Stage,” in *Renaissance Beasts*, ed. Fudge, 138-163.

through struggle within the individual but also through struggles between individuals.”²⁰

Although Fudge focuses on seventeenth-century England, the themes she and others explore are also evident in the works of Italian humanists. Petrarch, for instance, used a host of beast metaphors in his invectives, as David Marsh observes.²¹

Quattrocento humanists situated both classical and medieval models at the heart of their program of studies. Aristotle remained immensely popular during the Renaissance, and a number of notable humanists translated different parts of the Aristotelian corpus. Leonardo Bruni’s translations of the *Ethics*, *Politics*, and *Economics* were widely circulated.²² Trebizond translated some of Aristotle’s biological works while in Rome, as did his fellow Byzantine émigré Theodore Gaza.²³ Aristotle’s works informed one of the key components of the humanist educational program, which was the assertion that educators could not only teach their students but help them become

²⁰ Fudge, *Brutal Reasoning*, 66-67.

²¹ David Marsh, introduction to *Francesco Petrarca: Invectives*, ed. and trans. David Marsh (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003), xiii-xvi.

²² Bruni published a translation of the *Nichomachean Ethics* in 1416-1417, of the *Economics* in 1420, and of the *Politics* in 1437. Paul Grendler, *The Universities of the Italian Renaissance* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002), 395-396. On Bruni’s translations, see Paul Botley, *Latin Translation in the Renaissance: The Theory and Practice of Leonardo Bruni, Giannozzo Manetti, Erasmus* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 70-82. John Argyropoulos (1415-1487), a Byzantine émigré who taught in Florence from 1457 to 1471 and again from 1477 to 1481, produced a translation of the *Ethics* in 1464 that was “used as the base text for numerous commentaries and university lectures.” David Lines has “counted at least ninety editions of the work between 1478 and 1698.” David A. Lines, “Aristotle’s *Ethics* in the Renaissance,” in *The Reception of Aristotle’s Ethics*, ed. Jon Miller, 171-193 (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 176.

²³ On Trebizond’s translations, see John Monfasani, ed., *Collectanea Trapezuntiana: Texts, Documents, and Bibliographies of George of Trebizond* (Binghamton, NY: Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies, 1984), 705-707 and Monfasani, *George of Trebizond: A Biography and a Study of his Rhetoric and Logic* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1976), 71-77. Monfasani offers a concise overview of fifteenth-century translations of Aristotle in “The Pseudo-Aristotelian *Problemata* and Aristotle’s *De animalibus* in the Renaissance,” in *Natural Particulars: Nature and the Disciplines in Renaissance Europe*, ed. Anthony Grafton and Nancy G. Siraisi (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1999), 205-206.

virtuous.²⁴ This assertion was rooted in an understanding of the differences between youths and adults. Youths, so it was argued, were slaves to their emotions. Drawing on Aristotle, Pier Paolo Vergerio (1370-1444) described youthful emotion and the weakness of the rational powers among the young: “The young follow their passions above all and do everything with great vigor because they have keen desires which their bodily heat spurs on, while the rational powers and prudence that could moderate their desires are weak.”²⁵ Aeneas Silvius Piccolomini, the future Pope Pius II (1405-1464), shared Vergerio’s views. He added that devotion to pleasure was the hallmark of a beast: “We ought to chasten the body and hold in check its violent urges as if it were a savage beast, curbing with the rein of reason its reckless revolts against the soul.”²⁶ Battista Guarino (1434-1513), the son of Guarino of Verona, echoed his father’s views about youths and the duty of educators:

But if, owing to the feebleness of their age, young persons lack the discernment to acknowledge this truth, it will be the duty of their parents to accustom their tender ears to it with winsome words and to deter them from pleasure with threats, so that the zeal (for learning and virtue) they have imbibed from infancy may grow as they get older...²⁷

²⁴ For the purposes of this analysis, it is the model that humanists expounded that is important. It is worth noting, however, that whether educators could truly inculcate virtue, or whether they even wished to do so, has been a topic of dispute. See Anthony Grafton and Lisa Jardine, *From Humanism to the Humanities: Education and the Liberal Arts in Fifteenth- and Sixteenth-Century Europe* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1986).

²⁵ This and subsequent translations are Kallendorf’s. For all of the texts edited in this collection, I cite the section numbers Kallendorf provides. Pier Paolo Vergerio, *De ingenuis moribus et liberalibus adulescentiae studiis liber*, in *Humanist Educational Treatises*, trans. and ed. Craig W. Kallendorf, (Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 14. Cf. Arist., *Rh.* 2.12.7.

²⁶ Aeneas Silvius Piccolomini, *De liberorum educatione*, in *Humanist Educational Treatises*, trans. and ed. Kallendorf, 21.

²⁷ Battista Guarino, *De ordine docendi et studendi*, in *Humanist Educational Treatises*, trans. and ed. Kallendorf, 3.

Humanist educators, contemporaries of Trebizond, Guarino, and Poggio, thus organized their curricula around a basic concept of manhood rooted in the exercise of reason.

The Renaissance debt to classical models of reason and manhood is also evident in that fifteenth-century humanists advocated different methods to lead their charges to exercise reason. Vergerio argued that “those who are good should be strengthened and assisted through practice and precept, but those who are bad and blameworthy should be corrected.” “Good behavior,” he explained, “must be acquired and bad behavior either curtailed or entirely rooted out.” There were various ways of accomplishing this. Vergerio, drawing on the *De officiis*, considered it “a good outcome whether we are led to virtue by the hand of precept or compelled thereto by force and necessity; and fortunate indeed is the necessity that drives one to the good.”²⁸ Following Quintilian and Plutarch, Piccolomini stated that “boys must be led to honorable practices, not by wounds or blows, but by admonitions and explanations.” Praise and blame functioned in important ways: “the former incites [students] to virtuous deeds, the latter restrains them from disgraceful behavior.”²⁹ Educators also believed instructors could cultivate reason and virtue by serving as models to their students. Vergerio, relying on Plutarch, emphasized the importance of the instructor’s character:

They [students] should only be entrusted to those whose character and entire life has been thoroughly scrutinized, who do not present an example leading to sin but possess the authority to deter them from it. For as stakes are bound to young treeshoots to prevent them being bent over by their own weight or by the wind, so also young people should depend on companions from whose advice they may

²⁸ Vergerio, *De ingenuis moribus et liberalibus adulescentiae studiis liber*, in *Humanist Educational Treatises*, trans. and ed. Kallendorf, 11; 15; 29. Cf. Cic., *Off.* 1.32.118.

²⁹ Piccolomini, *De liberorum educatione*, in *Humanist Educational Treatises*, trans. and ed. Kallendorf, 10. Cf. ps. Plut., *De educ.* 12 and Quin., *Inst.* 1.3.14-17.

learn, by whose conscience they may be restrained, and in imitation of whom they may improve themselves.³⁰

Modeling appropriate behavior allowed instructors to guide good behavior and curtail bad behavior. According to Vergerio, it was important to “maintain at all times a consistent pattern of gravity and discretion,” as the young “are inclined to make mistakes, and unless they are restrained by the example and authority of their elders, they will always slip easily into worse conduct.”³¹ Piccolomini, like Vergerio, argued the importance of an instructor’s character: “the lives of teachers should be faultless and their morals irreproachable: this is the best proof that they neither have nor tolerate vices.”³²

He echoed Vergerio on the role of the instructor and used the same Plutarchan metaphor:

Just as farmers place fences around their young trees, so it is the duty of your instructors to encircle you with teachings in keeping with a praiseworthy life and with admonitions from which the shoots of the most correct morals will germinate, for to receive a proper education is the source and root of virtue.³³

Whether by admonition or modeling, educators—mature, rational men—were expected to curb their students’ passions, remedy the natural deficiencies of their student’s rational capacities, and help them cultivate and exercise their reason.

Humanist educators established a program that emphasized the role of instructors in the attainment of virtue, but it was also a program that essentially made one more manly. Educators such as Vergerio and Piccolomini, observing what they described as a state of emotional disorder, likened children to beasts rather than men and identified

³⁰ Vergerio, *De ingenuis moribus et liberalibus adolescentiae studiis liber*, in *Humanist Educational Treatises*, trans. and ed. Kallendorf, 17. Cf. ps. Plut., *De educ.* 7.

³¹ Vergerio, *De ingenuis moribus et liberalibus adolescentiae studiis liber*, in *Humanist Educational Treatises*, trans. and ed. Kallendorf, 10.

³² Piccolomini, *De liberorum educatione*, in *Humanist Educational Treatises*, trans. and ed. Kallendorf, 9.

³³ *Ibid.*, 10. Cf. ps. Plut., *De educ.* 7.

instructors as guides to proper behavior. For them, true manhood came at the end of the program when, guided by a virtuous instructor and true man, one had acquired the learning suitable of an erudite man and had reached a state of emotional maturity and rational self-control. The characterizations of manhood outlined here are clearly visible in the correspondence of Trebizond's feuds with Guarino and Poggio and particularly in the authors' attacks against their opponent's knowledge and learning.

The Knowledgeable Man

Some of the most explicit expressions of the humanist concept of masculinity during Trebizond's feuds with Guarino and Poggio are found in attacks leveled against an opponent's knowledge. The attacks involved insults about an adversary's learning, understanding of complex issues, or general intellectual capacity and were framed by language denoting failed masculinity. To label a rival as unlearned or lacking in his intellectual capabilities was to label him as less of a man. Trebizond's feud with Guarino illustrates these points well. The feud began in the spring of 1437 when Andreas Agaso composed a letter attacking Trebizond, whose *Rhetoricorum libri quinque* (*RLV*) had contained criticisms of one of Guarino's encomia. Agaso claimed to be a student of Guarino's, but Trebizond suspected Guarino wrote the letter himself, adopting a pseudonym to attack the *RLV* anonymously.³⁴ Agaso and Trebizond used concepts of failed masculinity to characterize each other as lacking knowledge and as unsuited to teach rhetoric. Each author verbally emasculated the other by likening his opponent's

³⁴ For the figures Andreas Agaso and Paulus Regius and the origins of the dispute, see Chapter Two, pages 24-25. As in Chapter Two, I refer to the authors by the names provided by the texts. When discussing the Agaso letter, I refer to the author as Andreas Agaso rather than Guarino because the authorship of that letter and Agaso's existence are in question. When discussing Trebizond's response to Guarino, I typically follow Trebizond and refer to "Agaso" as Guarino. Trebizond does occasionally discuss Agaso and Guarino separately, usually when trying to prove the two were the same person, and in those cases I make the distinction as well.

intellectual capacities to those of a child, a beast, or a woman. Agaso repeatedly used animal imagery to insult Trebizond's learning particularly in comparison with Guarino's, which he exalted. Beasts dominate the Trebizond-Agaso correspondence more than any other category of failed masculinity. Trebizond, fixated on Agaso's language, used the same images to attack Guarino's learning. These were definitional acts that relegated an opponent to a lower hierarchical status based on the portrayal of one's level of learning.

The herd, the fish, and the ass

Agaso relies on an assortment of animal images to ridicule Trebizond's eloquence as crude and his teachings as commonplace. This is evident in the beginning of Agaso's letter to Paulus Regius, dated March 15, 1437, where a play on words becomes a flashpoint for the feud. Agaso claims that Trebizond treats rhetoric not exceptionally [*ita egregie*], but rather "from the herd" [*e grege*], in an ordinary or vulgar manner.³⁵ He builds on this contrast to characterize Trebizond not as a master of rhetoric but as a brute. Later in the letter he explicitly describes Trebizond as having the "inordinate audacity" and stupidity of a herd animal [*pecus*] for suggesting Guarino should have used *scriptorum* instead of *scribentium* in his encomium.³⁶ Agaso's attack is more implicit shortly thereafter when, in listing ancient authorities to support Guarino's usage, he introduces "an example more familiar to Trebizond," a reference to flocks of sheep in the

³⁵ *Collectanea*, 365. (2) Unum enim tuo vel cachinno vel stomacho dignum opus in manus incidit, cazambanicam redolens loquacitatem verius quam eloquentiam, quo cum auctor Greculus Latinis dicendi rationem aperire profiteatur (est enim De rhetorica liber inscriptus). Ita egregie, vel e grege potius, disserit ut tam facile ei Latine sciendi consuetudinem ademeris quam eloquentie peritiam denegaris.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 369. (26) Memini siquidem nuper me legentem id ab eo de Guarino reprehensum annotasse: 'Cur etiam scribentium, non scriptorum dixerit?' O ingentem pecudis bipedis confidentiam-nisi excusandum pingue illud duxeritis ingenium, quod mox non intelligere sese fatetur!

For the initial criticism in the *RLV*, see *Ibid.*, 363. (8) Cur etiam "scribentium," non "scriptorum" dixerit non intelligo, nisi quod timidum in dicendi hominem, ne a "scripto" "scriptorum" dicere videretur, inscitia deterruit. Sed hec infinita sunt atque idcirco pretermittenda. See also Chapter Two, pages 41-42.

Aeneid written *greges balantum*, not *greges balantricum*. Trebizond, a stupid, brutish animal who writes *e grege*, is sure to be familiar with a reference to flocks of sheep.³⁷ Agaso uses repeated references to the ass, another herd animal. An example follows the reference to Virgil just mentioned. As Agaso marshals authorities to defend Guarino, he notes that “books are filled with phrases of this kind, pleasing to the sense of learned men, not the ears of asses.”³⁸ Agaso situates Trebizond, by virtue of his incorrect usage, on the wrong side of this contrast, implying he too has the ears of an ass, and thus is an ass himself. Shortly, he criticizes Trebizond’s style of composition by calling it the way of rustics, who “are accustomed to hearing braying asses” and so “prefer the harsh sounds of toads and cicadas to the music of Orpheus and Apollo.”³⁹

Agaso also employs fish metaphors to characterize Trebizond’s style as mediocre and to establish a low-class theme he develops to denigrate Trebizond. The first example occurs as Agaso casts Trebizond as a mere copyist of “many brilliant authors” and asks why anybody would want to read Trebizond’s works. He draws a distinction between “so many teachers and the most learned men [*peritissimi viri*] of this age” and those who know “nothing great or difficult” beyond “mackerel [*scomber*], sardines [*saperda*], little

³⁷ Ibid., 370. (28) Et quoniam pervicaces non facile cedere solent nisi multis obruantur exemplis, legisse debet... (29) Virgilius: ‘et amans et femina Dido;’ utque Trapezuntio familiaris inducatur exemplum: ‘quinque greges illi balantum,’ non balantricum. Monfasani cites Verg., *Aen.* 4.95 and 101.

³⁸ *Collectanea*, 370. (29) Quid plura? Referti sunt codices huius generis dictionibus peritorum sensum, non asinorum auriculas, oblectantibus, usu etiam approbante, “quem penes arbitrium est et ius et norma loquendi.” Cf. Hor., *Ars. P.* 72.

³⁹ *Collectanea*, 370. (31) “Dein quis risum teneat cum eiusdem orationis compositionem suis concinnat auribus et per nares absone quadret. Verborum colligatio totum pervertit ordinem. Hic rusticorum mos est ut, cum rudentes asinos audire soliti sint, rubetarum atque cicadarum stridones vel Orphei et Apollinis cithare preferant, velut cum illam suo more concinnat seriem: ‘Nulla enim tam ingens, tam clara, tam admirabilis res gesta est quam non vetustas obscuraret et oblivio nisi litterarum splendor et scribentium lumen accenderit.’”

tunny fish [*pelamis*], and salted fish [*tarichos*].”⁴⁰ Each is a common variety of fish and though Agaso does not state it directly, his use of fish metaphors seems designed to liken Trebizond to a low-class fishmonger with mediocre wares, in this case his teaching and the precepts of the *RLV*. The implication is that, like all of these ordinary fish, Trebizond’s works are common, cheap, and not suited to the tastes of the truly learned men of his age. This reading is upheld later in Agaso’s letter when he describes Trebizond as a bellowing ass who prefers the sound of toads to the lyre of Orpheus, and then laments the “callous taste, completely devoid of elegance, which thinks there is no difference between ambrosia and salted fish!”⁴¹ The passage paints Trebizond as ignorant but also contrasts Guarino’s wares—the sweet style of his encomium—with Trebizond’s by likening the former to luxurious, rich ambrosia and the latter to cheap, preserved fish.

The context of Agaso’s fish imagery indicates that he intends it to be insulting to Trebizond, but his choice of words is especially meaningful because he refers to specific fish commonly known as small, cheap, repulsive, and potentially harmful. The particular fish to which Agaso refers are almost certainly drawn from classical Latin authors and lend weight to his intended insults and depiction of Trebizond the Fishmonger. The *scomber* appears in Pliny’s *Natural History* and is generally believed to be a mackerel. In his notes on the text, John Bostock writes the *scomber* was “a very common fish of

⁴⁰ Ibid., 366. (6) Sin in tanta dicendi copia, doctrina ordine, subtilitate, dulcedine tam preclara negliguntur auctores, a quibus librarius ipse, si que eruditius ab eo dicta sunt, cuncta transcripsit verius quam excogitavit, quis sua legere volet? An huic, qui inter tot huius etatis doctores et viros peritissimos vult solus scire videri, nova quedam artis acumina et aptiora dicendi documenta perperit, usus aliquis et in perorandis causis exercitatio quam in senatu vel in foro vendicaverit, qui preter scombros, saperdam, palamides, tarichon nil magnum novit aut arduum?

⁴¹ Ibid., 370-371. (31) “‘Quam commodius hoc,’ inquit Trapezuntius, ‘et robustius ita diceretur: Nulla enim tam ingens, tam clara, tam admirabilis res gesta est, quam vetustas et oblivio, nisi litterarum splendor et scribentium lumen accenderit, non obscuret?’ O callosum vere gustum et mundiciarum prorsus expertem qui inter ambrosiam et tarichon nil interesse sentiat!” See note 39 for the preceding text.

Rome, of small size, and was in little repute.”⁴² Persius’s first satire alludes to the fact that bad poetry was typically used to wrap the *scomber* when it was put out for sale.⁴³ The fish had a reputation as the fate of bad poets. M. Terentius Varro casts the *saperda* as repulsive and harmful: “We are jolly and jovial, so we think. Though in fact like rotten fish, we stink.”⁴⁴ Varro also attributes to Lucilius a passage describing the death of L. Cornelius Lentulus Lupus, a Roman consul in 156 B.C., as the result of different kinds of fish, including the *saperda*.⁴⁵ Sextus Pompeius Festus, the grammarian, defines the *saperda* as “a species of the worst fish.”⁴⁶ Modern commentators relying on these sources describe the *saperda* as a “particularly cheap and nasty fish” and a “species of quite dreadful fish, suggesting that it was far from fêted for its culinary qualities.”⁴⁷ Pliny describes the *pelamis*, the third of Agaso’s fish, as a young tunny fish, “called mudfish or *pelamydes* (from the Greek for ‘mud’).”⁴⁸ Festus identifies the *pelamis* similarly. The connection to mud is enough to cast the *pelamis* as another lowly fish, but Pliny adds that

⁴² Plin., *HN* 9.49. *The Natural History of Pliny*, trans. John Bostock (London: H.G. Bohn, 1855).

⁴³ Pers., 1.43. “an erit qui velle recuset os populi meruisse et cedro digna locutus linquere nec scombros metuentia carmina nec tus?” Susanna Braund notes the comparisons to Cat. 95.9 and Hor. *Ep.* 2.1.269-270. All translations of Persius and Juvenal in this chapter are Braund’s. *Juvenal and Persius*, ed. and trans. Susanna Morton Braund (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004).

⁴⁴ Var., *Men.*, 312. omnes videmur nobis esse belli festiui, saperdae cum/simus σαπροι. See Brian A. Krostenko, *Cicero, Catullus, and the Language of Social Performance* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001), 57.

⁴⁵ Var., *Ling.*, 7.47. Apud Lucilium: ‘Quid est? Thynno capto cobium excludunt foras’ et ‘Occidunt, Lupe, saperdae te et iura siluri’ et ‘Sumere te atque amian.’ Piscium nomina sunt eorumque in Graecia origo.

⁴⁶ Fest., 324-325. Saperda, genus pessimi piscis.

⁴⁷ Krostenko, 4; L.B.T. Houghton, “The Wolf and the Dog (Horace, ‘Sermones’ 2.2.64),” *The Classical Quarterly* 54, no.1 (May 2004): 303.

⁴⁸ The translation is Rackham’s. Pliny, *Natural History*, trans. H. Rackham (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1940). Plin., *HN* 9.47-48. Pelamys genus piscis dictum, quod in luto moretur, quod Graece dicitur πηλός. Cf. Fest., 207.

“they must be eaten only when they are quite fresh, and even then they cause severe fits of flatulence.” The *pelamis* appears in Juvenal’s seventh satire as the reward advocates attain for plying their rhetorical skill in court: “What reward does your voice get? A tiny shoulder of dried-up ham and a jar of little tunnies.”⁴⁹ The last of Agaso’s examples, the *tarichos* [τάριχος], seems to be a simple stock expression for any preserved meat, or in this case salted fish.⁵⁰

There may also be a cultural component to Agaso’s fish imagery. In addition to the negative depictions of the *saperda*, modern commentators also note that the fish was associated with the east and with Greeks in particular. Persius’s fifth satire links the *saperda* to the Black Sea as does Aristotle in discussing the σαπέρδης, and Varro describes it as Greek in origin.⁵¹ Brian Krostenko argues that the “presence of a Greek adjective [σαπροί]”—meaning rotten or stale—with *saperda* in Varro suggests “not only the meanness” of the fish, but also “the decadent Greek east.” L.B.T Houghton explains that “the fact that it [the *saperda*] had to be imported from Greece (or even from Egypt) might be taken to support its status as a *recherché* commodity, difficult to obtain and costly to transport despite the poor return it offered when finally served up in Rome.”⁵² All this hardly proves Agaso intended the *saperda* to be a slight of Trebizond as a Greek, as he makes no such explicit statements, yet such a use would certainly be consistent with

⁴⁹ Juv., 7.120.

⁵⁰ Liddell and Scott define τάρικος as “anything preserved or pickled by artificial means” or “generally, meat preserved by smoking, salting, or pickling, dried or smoked fish.”

⁵¹ *The Satires of Juvenal, Persius, Sulpicia, and Lucilius*, trans. Lewis Evans and William Gifford (New York: Harper, 1881), 253. The notes on Persius’ fifth satire contain a reference to Aristotle. The city of Trebizond, of course, was on the Black Sea. George identified with the city of Trebizond throughout his life despite having been born a Cretan. Monfasani reports that George stated his great-great-grandfather had emigrated to Crete from Trebizond. George himself routinely signed his name “Georgius Trapezuntius Cretensis,” an indication of his pride in both locations. See Monfasani, *George of Trebizond*, 4-5.

⁵² Krostenko, 4; Houghton, 303.

Agaso's other anti-Greek language. Trebizond, an émigré rhetorician in Italy, came under fire by Agaso as common. He was hardly a suitable instructor of youths, or so Agaso contends by likening Trebizond to Heraclides in Cicero's *Pro Flacco*.⁵³ One of Agaso's other main arguments, furthermore, is that Guarino expended too much time and money on Trebizond after the latter's arrival in Italy. Given Agaso's other attacks, I suggest that he chose the *saperda* as a fitting metaphor. The fish allow him to imply an image of Trebizond as an émigré scholar who, lacking a sufficient knowledge of Latin, deals in commonplace lessons just as a fishmonger peddles cheap mackerel and unappetizing, though exotic, wares.

The manner in which Agaso employs his fish imagery also carries undertones of classical Roman satirists who—like Lucilius, Varro, and Persius above—not only identified some of Agaso's fish as common, cheap, and rotten but incorporated them into attacks against particular individuals and vices. Humanists appreciated authors such as Horace, Persius, Juvenal, and Martial. Guarino's commentaries on Juvenal were popular and widespread, and Juvenal occupied a place in his curriculum.⁵⁴ Guarino was also involved in the spread of Greek satire, including his translations of Lucian's *Slander*, *The Fly*, and *The Parasite*.⁵⁵ Agaso's fish insults call to mind Juvenal's fifth satire, which features fish and other seafood at a dinner party as part of a commentary on the inequities

⁵³ For Agaso's comments on Trebizond as an instructor, see Chapter Two, pages 44-47.

⁵⁴ On Juvenal's place in the humanist curriculum, see Battista Guarino, *De ordine docendi et studendi*, in *Humanist Educational Treatises*, trans. and ed. Kallendorf, 25. Battista Guarino pairs Juvenal, "the prince of satirists" with Terence and argues "with these two authors at one's disposal, one may be confident, not only of being able to hold forth elegantly on any subject that arises in day-to-day speech, but also of having some maxim suitable for every subject."

⁵⁵ Guarino translated Lucian's *Slander* and *The Fly* between 1403 and 1408 while in Constantinople. In 1418, he translated *The Parasite*. David Marsh, *Lucian and the Latins: Humor and Humanism in the Early Renaissance* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press: 1998), xi.

between the feasts of a rich man and the scant fare of a poor man.⁵⁶ While those of high status feast on lobster, the poor eat crayfish garnished with half an egg. On the one hand, the wealthy host Virro feasts on exquisite food, “a lamprey [*muraena*], the biggest that comes from the Sicilian whirlpool.” On the other hand, the lowly guests such as Trebius are presented with “an eel [*anguilla*], cousin of the long snake, or a Tiber fish spattered with gray blotches, like you a slave bred on the banks, bloated from the gushing sewer.”⁵⁷

In Agaso’s insults, the quality of the fish illustrates the difference not between rich and poor but between learned and unlearned.⁵⁸ The food motif remains, too, as Agaso distinguishes Guarino’s eloquence from Trebizond’s by contrasting ambrosia, the food of the gods, with common salted fish, the food of mere mortals, but more to the point of low-class mortals, and by lamenting the taste that cannot distinguish between the two. Like the food at Juvenal’s dinner party, one of these is exquisite and one is not. The contrast bears even more weight because, as Agaso maintains throughout the letter, Trebizond arrogantly believes that his own eloquence, his rhetorical taste, surpasses Guarino’s. Trebizond did, after all, dare to correct Guarino’s encomium. The fish metaphor thus functions as an assault on Trebizond’s arrogance, as well as his ignorance. Trebizond’s response, addressed to Guarino himself, indicates that he was aware of the implications of Agaso’s language and imagery.

⁵⁶Emily Gowers, *The Loaded Table: Representations of Food in Roman Literature* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 211-219; Kirk Freudenburg, *Satires of Rome: Threatening Poses from Lucilius to Juvenal* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 264-277; Maria Plaza, *The Function of Humour in Roman Verse Satire: Laughing and Lying* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 108-110; Catherine Connors, “Epic Allusion in Roman Satire,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Roman Satire*, ed. Kirk Freudenburg (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 124-125.

⁵⁷ Juv., 5.80-87 and 99-106.

⁵⁸ Plaza discusses the use of exaggeration in establishing “raised objects” in satirical humor. Plaza, 53-166.

Trebizond's response to Guarino in 1437 frequently mentions Agaso's animal images and reflects his anxiety about the metaphors and their intent. The opening sections, in which he argues that Guarino had written as Agaso, offer an example of how he too marshals the language of masculinity. Like Agaso, Trebizond challenges his opponent's eloquence. He claims that beyond the fact that nobody had ever heard of an "Andreas Agaso," Guarino's authorship is evident given the letter's rigidity, shallowness, and contradictions. "The speech," he continues, "is crowded with asses, mackerel, sheep (and these two-legged!), tunny, salted fish, sea fish,⁵⁹ and others of these kinds suited to your taste."⁶⁰ Trebizond's attacks are blunter than Agaso's insinuations depicting Trebizond as Fishmonger, but he uses the same images as his opponent, including asses and all the varieties of fish. He even retains the food motif in reference to taste. Guarino's authorship is also clear, Trebizond adds, from the tone of the Agaso letter, which he characterizes as typical of Guarino's habits of attacking others, including "the most learned Poggio."⁶¹ The mention of Poggio is a reference to the recent and well-known

⁵⁹ *Sus* might mean swine, but Lewis and Short list a secondary definition, based on Ov. *Hal.* 132, as "a kind of fish." The Oxford Latin Dictionary cites Ovid and defines it as a "sea-fish, perh.=Greek ὤς, an unknown fish of the Euxine." Considering Agaso's use of fish, I understand Trebizond to be referring to a another type of fish.

⁶⁰ *Collectanea*, 381. (2) At primum, nullum in Italia qui litteraturam profiteatur hoc nomine appellari constat; nec sane invenies aliquem preter te qui se ita velit vocitari. Deinde, si Agasones doctorum hominum aliquos nuncupari constaret, quis tamen ea scripta Guarini esse non intelligat qui tantam orationis duritiem, tantam sententiarum levitatem tantam argumentorum inter se repugnantiam videat? Nihil enim est in ipsis commode, graviter, robusteque dictum; nihil non pueriliter atque inepte, ne stultissime dicam, excogitatum. Asinis, scombris, pecudibus (et his bipedibus!), pelamidibus, taricho, suibus, ceterisque huiusmodi tuo stomacho dignis, imo vero Agasone dignissimis referta oratio est. Trebizond emphasizes the *bipes* to make clear his response to Agaso. Cf. *Ibid.*, 369, note 36. O ingentem pecudis bipedis confidentiam...

⁶¹ *Collectanea*, 381-382. (3) Que res ita etiam in aliis Guarino factitata est ut et que ita scripta sint a Guarino et qui sic scribat Guarinus esse videatur... Quid enim illa "egregie vel e grege," "suo vel suis," et que horum similia sunt tua negabis, Agasoniam hanc redolentia scurilitatem? Caperare vero frontem aut detrudere tuum non est? At cum in doctissimum Poggium scriberes, tale quid tunc posuisti, ut et hic facis, cum opus acrimonia esse videretur? Multa sunt quibus irretitus teneris. Cf. *Ibid.*, 365, note 35.

literary dispute, the Scipio-Caesar controversy, between Guarino and Poggio in 1435.⁶² Trebizond then asserts that the name “Andreas Agaso” is further evidence of Guarino’s authorship, since it is characteristic of Guarino “to think that you alone are a man, and others whom you drive before you are asses.” Monfasani’s note on the text explains the joke. He translates “Andreas Agaso” from the Greek Ἀνδρεία ἀγάζω as “I rejoice exceedingly in [my] manliness.”⁶³ Trebizond’s comments indicate that he perceived Agaso’s animal insults as attempts to emasculate him verbally by robbing him of his learning and eloquence. His reflection on Agaso’s name is an indictment of those attempts.

As fervently as Trebizond criticizes Agaso’s animal imagery, he is more than willing to use it himself to denigrate Guarino and to adopt the social status theme in the Agaso letter. Whereas Agaso casts Trebizond as a fishmonger, Trebizond describes Guarino as a donkey-driver to depict his opponent as lacking the eloquence, taste, and learning of a true learned man. For example, in response to Agaso’s criticism of

Trebizond’s characterizations of Poggio would not always remain so positive. He later revised his response to Guarino to reflect his changing opinions of Poggio. He changed *doctissimus Poggius* to *indoctus Poggius*, skilled [*peritissimus*] to unskilled [*imperitissimus*], and famous [*clarus*] to infamous [*infamosus*]. See Monfasani’s notes on the text, *Collectanea*, 407-408.

⁶² On the Scipio-Caesar controversy, see Chapter Three, note 24. Trebizond also accuses Guarino of habitually attacking learned men in a cover letter accompanying the present response, composed in 1437 and addressed to Leonello. Leonello was familiar with Guarino’s participation in disputes, including the Scipio-Caesar controversy. It was he who, during a trip to Florence, encountered Poggio’s piece defending Scipio and attacking Caesar and alerted Guarino to its existence. Guarino penned his defense of Caesar shortly thereafter. Mark Jurdjevic, “Civic Humanism and the Rise of the Medici,” *Renaissance Quarterly* 52, no.4 (Winter 1999): 1002-1003. *Collectanea*, 377-378. (1) Guarinus Veronensis, humanissime princeps, vir etate nostra, ut credit, doctissimus, eloquentia sua fretus invectivam in me edidit, que his diebus tandem in manus incidit. Letarer profecto, quoniam in plerosque doctos viros Guarinus scripsit, in eorum acervo me quoque connumerari nisi peritorum hominum iudicio viderem non visum Guarino dignum Georgium in quem nomine suo scriberet, quamvis et sui gratia non parum doleam quod videam acuto in dicendo homini, si adversarius voluerit, idipsum, quod sibi indidit, nomen hesurum perpetuo.

⁶³ *Collectanea*, 382. (4) Sed mihi id sufficit quod te Andream Agasonem inscripsisti (tuum enim est te solum virum, ceteros quos agas asinos estimare) quodque apertissime Agaso litteratura se Greca infectum ostendit, quam qui teneat, Georgio iratum invenies neminem. See also Monfasani’s note, *ibid.*, 407.

Trebizond's addition of "*cum amplificatione*" to Cicero's definition of demonstrative oratory, Trebizond exhorts Guarino to learn from him or other learned men. If Guarino thinks it too shameful for such a divine man [*divinus homo*] as himself to learn from others, Trebizond urges him to leave "letters and teaching to others. You can watch over asses."⁶⁴ The comment implies that Guarino's arrogant refusal to learn from others and his view of himself as a *divinus homo* is evidence that he is suited only to teach asses. Trebizond uses the ass metaphor again when describing Agaso's criticisms as "braying," and when he suggests that if his arguments have failed to convince Guarino, it is because Guarino is too occupied with "driving asses."⁶⁵ He alludes to the Latin proverb *purus grammaticus purus asinus* to cast Guarino as an ass and again encourages him to limit himself to asses—to grow old in directing them. Both Agaso and Trebizond, then, express their technical arguments through concepts of manhood, contrasting the learning

⁶⁴ Ibid., 385. (19) Nam cum demonstrativum genus esse dicamus quod in alicuius certe persone laudem vel vituperationem cum amplificatione attribuitur, "cum amplificatione" particula tibi, in diffiniendo acutissimo, quoniam laus etiam cum amplificatione nobis esse asseratur, minime adicienda videtur. Nam que formis insunt, in diffinitione generis ponenda non arbitraris. Disce a me, quousque tibi discendi tempus conceditur, aut, si dedignaris, dialectice doctos interroga. Sin ab his etiam discere turpe divino tibi homini putas, quoniam preter dialectum id docere te poterat nemo, litteras et doctrinam aliis omite. Tu asinos custodias.

Agaso had argued that Trebizond included the addition to Cicero's definition to seem as if he had contributed something of his own. See Chapter Two, page 40.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 386. (20) Quare nec ita se habere potest ad laudem ut ad consumptionem vite mortalitas, quod Agaso ruditer. Nam hec quidem idem possunt. Amplificatio tam laudem quam vituperationem, oppositas formas, complectitur. Nam que toti insunt, eodem de subiectis partibus modo predicantur. Persuasimus quod demonstravimus? An in agendis asinis occupatus, minus advertis? Crede mihi, crede, inquam, Guarine, verum est quod vulgo dicitur, purus grammaticus, purus—nosti quod sequitur. Quare si sapis, tabescas in casu, senescas in flectendis asinis. In schemate Agasonum, quod tute tibi elegisti, moraberis. In promiscuo genere diligentissime te retinebis. Nam si terminos tuos egredere, cave ne, cum per ora virorum ut doctissimus credas volitare, ut Agaso verius volites.

Lewis and Short define *rudo* as "to bray," specifically in reference to asses, as well as "to make a loud noise, roar or bellow," as an orator might. Trebizond clearly relies on the former definition but the insult probably encompasses part of the latter definition as well. He uses the word several times, and elsewhere describes Guarino as grunting like a pig. Cf. Ibid., 388-389. (31) At Cicero (o, quomodo te appellabo? Nihil enim habere hominis videre.) hanc ipsam concertationem dixit, cui tu contentionem conferre videris. Si ergo recte Cicero, et nos non insulse; sin Cicero hec parum perspexit, dimitte nos qui cum eo errare malimus quam cum Agasonibus rudere; Ibid., 399 (77) Tu nos iniuria queris occupare. Utrum maiorem nobis hinc ex ingratitudine infamiam an tibi gloriam, quod tales docuisses conflare putasti? Sed ne longior sim, hec aliud in tempus, si grun<n>ies, reserventur.

of true men with that of those who teach only the common and lowly. This is a definitional act that raises one man higher on a hierarchy of masculinity and relegates his opponent to a lower position. The fishmonger and donkey-driver accusations imply the same thing. By catering to the less educated crowd and offering only mackerel or salted fish, an instructor reveals himself to be lacking true learning and thus true manhood.

Trebizond's discussion of demonstrative oratory is not the only time he attacks Guarino's eloquence through animal images. He accuses Guarino of having been educated in a donkey stable and makes multiple references to such stables.⁶⁶ He also uses animal imagery when alleging that Guarino was so angry about the criticisms in the *RLV* that "unable to mollify your anger, you turned to lies, and clothed neither in the pelt of a lion...nor in the pelt of the fox...but in that of the ass, as all are familiar with your dullness, you polished the Agaso invective against me."⁶⁷ Here Trebizond uses the animal metaphor not to advance the social status theme and describe Guarino as a donkey-driver but more directly to liken Guarino to an ass. The description of Guarino

⁶⁶ Ibid., 390. (36) Unum illud oramus atque obtestamur, sicui harum rerum cura est, Partitionum Ciceronis principium perlegat ut ad hec que dicta sunt Ciceronis quoque sententia valeat in asinorum Agasones intrudere stabula, ubi qui in me invectivam scripsit educatus videtur. Cf. Ibid., 398. (71)...si hec preterea in ultionem Guarini dicuntur, omnia que nemo teneat preter illum qui semper mihi invidit, quis mente sanus dubitabit e libris atque scola in asinorum stabula prosiliisse Guarinum ibique Agasonem factum hanc in me invectivam erudisse...

⁶⁷ Ibid., 387. (24) Tanto assumpto temporis spatio, cum sepe ac multum tecum quidnam scribendum in me tibi esset voveres, tamen, quia nihil inveniebas et iracundiam lenire non poteras, conversus in mendacia es, neque leonis, ut Hercules (nam id adversario reliquisti) neque vulpecule, ut fallax (nam id turpe tibi existimasti), sed asininam indutus pellem, ut hebetudinem tuam omnes cognoscerent, Agasoniam in nos invectivam erudisti. Verum mendacem te paulo post acrius arguemus.

Trebizond's remark may be a response to Agaso's mockery of Trebizond's disparagement of classical and medieval rhetorical authorities. Agaso had likened Trebizond to Aesop's raven which, to fit in among a group of peacocks, had dressed itself as one. For Agaso's comment, see Ibid., 366. (7) At Espoi meminisse corvi debuit, qui cum inter pavones simulata veste irrupisset, tanto mox ludibrio et irrisioni fuit ut et pavonis et corvinis expilatus pennis vix tandem implumis effugerit... . *Corpus Fabularum Aesopicarum*, ed. A. Hausrath and H. Hunger, 1.1, 129-130, no. 103 (Leipzig: Teubner, 1970).

adopting the dress—or behaviors—of the ass, especially in contrast to donning the dress of a truly intimidating animal such as a lion, implies that Guarino is himself an ass.

The “dullness” Trebizond ascribes to Guarino reflects a lack of eloquence that he contrasts with the learning of a true man. The contrast sits at the center of one of his most boastful claims, that he will easily vanquish Guarino with the strength of his eloquence. Here he casts himself among the “many and distinguished men” [*multi praeclarique viri*] who defend themselves against the persecution of others. He claims that he does not at all fear Guarino, listing the “copiousness of my speech,” the “flood of my genius, and “my erudition in Greek as much as Latin” as reasons why “I, like a mailed knight, am able to topple you, seated upon an ass.”⁶⁸ The vivid contrast between the virile knight on a charger and the non-combatant seated on an ass identifies learning and eloquence as essential components of true manhood. Trebizond presents himself as the better equipped of the two for combat, given his skills in two languages. The description also fits alongside another of Trebizond’s recurring claims, that Guarino had devised the Agaso pseudonym because he feared Trebizond’s eloquence: “Indeed everyone sees and understands that you have disguised yourself so cunningly because you cannot endure George’s eloquence, at whose force of speaking you have now long trembled.”⁶⁹ Fear

⁶⁸ Ibid., 382. (7) Nam, Guarine, nec enim molestum cuiquam futurum puto, quod multi preclarique viri natura ipsa duce fecerunt, si ad meam defensionem me laudavero, presertim cum tu in persequendo id facias. Ea mihi orationis copia est ut te non pertimescam; id ingenii flumen ut contemnam; ea tam Greca, quam Latina eruditio ut te facile possim exagitare; ea denique maiorum rerum doctrina ut, ne grande quid dicam, tanquam catafractus eques, insidentem te asino non hasta, sed solo afflatu currendi precipitem valeam deturbare. The passage is also an example of Trebizond’s response to Agaso’s anti-Greek language. See Chapter Two, page 67.

⁶⁹ *Collectanea*, 382 (5) Vident enim omnes atque intelligunt versute sic te inscripsisse quoniam orationem Georgii ferre non posses, cuius vim dicendi iam exhorruisses. Itaque credidisse te aiunt, si nomine inaudito scriberes, vel nil scripturum Georgium vel, si ad te scriberet, deum hominesque testari posses magnam tibi horum omnium ignaro iniuriam fieri. See also *ibid.*, 381 (2) Nam ut latere possis, ne tibi respondeam, vel inter asinos ita te intrusisti ut Agaso factus sis et posteris hoc te nomine tuis scriptis commendes. Quid enim

drove Guarino to hide behind a pseudonym rather than to meet Trebizond in open battle, armed only with their respective skills and eloquence, the weapons of a true man.

The child and the man

The beast imagery that Agaso introduced is the predominant expression of failed masculinity during the Trebizond-Guarino feud, but it is not the only one. Each man attempted to emasculate his opponent by likening his knowledge and eloquence to that of a child and thus effectively giving him the status of a pupil or student. As with the beast imagery, labeling an opponent childish typically situated the author as the true man—learned and knowledgeable—above the failed man—the child who lacked knowledge and skill—on a hierarchy. Agaso’s use of this strategy was more subtle than his beast imagery, though Trebizond—sometimes but not always in direct response to the language of the Agaso letter—employed it quite explicitly. It is worth noting too that age was no obstacle to allegations of childishness. Trebizond (1395-1472) was the junior of both Guarino (1374-1460) and Poggio (1380-1459) but accused both men of childishness and cast himself as the learned master in contrast to his depictions of each of them as students.

The contrast between manhood and childishness in the Trebizond-Guarino feud is at times straightforward, as when Agaso criticizes Trebizond’s “childish diligence” in correcting Guarino’s encomium. For Agaso, childish diligence means an excessively ornamented style that is wordy and clumsy, and obscures meaning. It is ostentation for

celare nomen tuum, et Agasonem nescio quem, non te in Georgium invehi credituros homines putasti? See note 60 for the following text.

I understand *inscribo* as another of Trebizond’s references to Guarino adopting the “Agaso” pseudonym. In furnishing himself with the pseudonym, Trebizond accuses Guarino of disguising himself in order to hide. See pages 194-195.

the sake of ostentation, so that Trebizond can appear to be learned.⁷⁰ The result, according to Agaso, is not that Trebizond appears learned but that his corrections appear so contrived as to violate Cicero's warning that "a speech especially loses its conviction, and a speaker his authority" if it seems too pleasant. While Guarino laid "aside flattery of his listeners" and was therefore "devoted to serious ideas and to gravity," Trebizond's changes so obscured the sense of the text that it was nearly unrecognizable.⁷¹ Citing Cicero, Agaso argues that Trebizond's flattery—his style, which he undertakes with "truly childish diligence" [*puerilis diligentia*—harmed his authority as a speaker and rendered him suspect [*suspectus*], unintelligible [*obscurus*], and hateful [*invisus*]. He characterizes Trebizond's changes as needless, excessive, and error-ridden. He accuses Trebizond of changing the arrangement—already so sweet and elegant—of Guarino's words for the worse, exhausting the manner of the speech—presumably a comment about Trebizond's wordy ostentation—and obscuring its sense "by a too lengthy and wandering display." Agaso's contention that Trebizond's changes were "childish" stands in contrast to Guarino's implicitly manly style, which he casts as carefully considered, more restrained, and reliant on *ratio*.

⁷⁰ Cf. Agaso's criticism of Trebizond's definition of demonstrative oratory, note 64 above and page 182 below.

⁷¹ *Collectanea*, 371. (35) Accedit quod Guarinus id diligenter ex artis institutione servavit ne festiva nimis in principio et apparata sit oratio quoniam ea res, ut a Cicerone traditum est, 'maxime orationi fidem, oratori autem adimit auctoritatem.' Et omissis aurium lenociniis, Guarinus sententiis gravitatieque servavit. Ab sententia namque duplici partes primas sumpsit exordii, utrique rationem aptam gravemque subiiciens. At Trapezuntius ita suavem ita concinnum in peius permutat ordinem et longiore ac vitioso quodam hyperbato pronuntiationem fatigat, sensum obscurat, et prolixiore ac errabundo tandem ambitu vix quid dicat intelligitur et fucose cuidam vereque puerili diligentie intentus, priusquam receptus sit auditori suspectum obscurumque se reddat et invisum.

Monfasani notes the comparison to Cic., *Inv. rhet.* 1.25. The translation is Hubbell's. Cicero, *De inventione*, trans. H.M. Hubbell (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1949). "The exordium...should contain very little brilliance [*splendor*], vivacity [*festivitas*] or finish of style [*concinnitudo*], because these give rise to a suspicion of preparation and excessive ingenuity. As a result of this most of all the speech loses conviction and the speaker, authority."

Trebizond is often far more explicit than Agaso in his characterizations of his opponent's childish knowledge and style. He accuses Guarino of childishness, for instance, when discussing the Scipio-Caesar controversy between Guarino and Poggio in 1435. During that dispute, Guarino had appealed to Livy to defend Caesar. Trebizond claims that Guarino expounded Livy's text like a schoolboy [*discipulus*]. His attack presumes a link between undeveloped skills and childishness. "What is cruder," Trebizond asks, than Guarino's handling of Livy's text?⁷² Trebizond again questions Guarino's manly knowledge when discussing how accusers and defenders frame their arguments. Here he mocks Guarino for not knowing things that not only men but even boys know.⁷³ This is a common refrain. Elsewhere, Trebizond pauses during a litany of technical arguments to reflect. "Why do I go over all these things," he asks, "You confuse everything...Will you not consider it shameful if even boys understand, and you, veteran orator, are ignorant?"⁷⁴ Trebizond later censures Guarino for Agaso's comment about

⁷² *Collectanea*, 386. (22) Quid enim rudius quam cum scribat Livius prestantem fuisse virum P. Scipionem, belli tamen artibus quam pacis prestantiorem, his verbis, 'pacis artibus,' pusillanimum illum putare neque videre prestantiam in omnibus attestatum homini Livium? Que cum in pacis et belli artibus ei partita sit, si utraque in re qualis fuerit Scipio scire cupis, prestans, inquit; si in utra prestantior, in belli artibus, inquit. Tu prestans illud, quod Livius quasi genus posuerat, pro pusillanimo interpretaris. Ita litteraturam tenes. Sic textus discipulis exponis.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 388. (27) Nam etsi docendi commoditate adducti, non nunquam pauca quedam separatim exponamus, undique tamen apparet nullum ad refellendum excogitari posse preceptum quod confirmationi reddi non possit. Et enim que quis observat in argumentatione adversarii diluenda, eadem ipse, nisi diligentius ut vitet circumspiciat, fetor erit magis quam rhetor et tui similis. Lege Ciceronem ubicunque de his tractat. An saltem que ad Herennium scribit, queque non viri tantum, sed pueri etiam intelligunt, infans tu vidisti? A causa, vita, collatione, loco, tempore, ceterisque huiusmodi nonne tam accusator quam defensor, ut suam stabilit, sic adversarii coniecturam labefactat?

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 396. (63) Exornationes tanquam colores distinguunt orationem. Eas occupare loco et modo non vulgare, sed ubivis communissimum. Tu, qui primum probe factitare deberes, nec alterum quidem potes attingere. Nihil enim unquam graviter repetis, nihil asseveranter concludis; nihil acute expedis; nihil prudenter distribuis; nihil acriter subiicis. Cur cuncta recenseo? Omnia confundis. In omnibus heres. Nullius naturam, nullius locum, nullius modum perspicis. Que orationis tue vitia ignorantiam vi, loco imperitiam, modo hebetudinem, numero ruditatem, re dementiam pre se ferunt. Non igitur operies te atque obvelabis, sed detecto capite in ora hominum amplius aspicere audebis? Non turpe duces sique vel pueri sciunt, veteranus tu rhetor ignorabis?

“childish diligence:” “Surely these comments, if they were said thus to women or children or real ‘Agasos,’ would still seem unbecoming to them. You, who think yourself learned, will boast about them. You are ignorant, completely ignorant of the art of speaking, Guarino!” This comment also offers one of Trebizond’s few attempts to feminize his opponent.⁷⁵ Alongside another reference to children, it is clear that feminization functions as another expression of failed masculinity, as a means of emasculating an opponent. Indeed, Trebizond then describes again Guarino’s arguments in the Agaso invective as childish [*argumentum puerile*].⁷⁶

Even as Trebizond characterizes Guarino as childish, he condemns Guarino for doing the same to him. As with the beast imagery, Trebizond’s protests indicate his recognition that attacks on masculinity could be employed to great effect, and that humanists experienced—or at least articulated—anxiety as a result. An excellent example is when Trebizond is bristling at the long list Agaso compiled of the supposed errors in the *RLV*. Trebizond describes the compilation as frivolous and childish [*leve et puerile*], not to say “Agasonian.” It is likely not a coincidence that Trebizond casts Agaso’s behavior as *leve*, given that, as discussed in Chapter 1, accusations of *levitas* featured so prominently in Agaso’s attacks on Trebizond’s conduct. Emasculating Agaso’s behavior—and thus Guarino’s—gave Trebizond access to criticisms of *levitas* that he

⁷⁵ Ibid., 401. (85) Ad haec festivam nimis et apparatus appellas permutationem meam, et fucosam, puerilem diligentiam... Si festiva lenociniisque referta oratio est, quomodo longiore hyperbato prolixioreque ambitu obscura et pronuntiatione fatigas? Hec enim robuste nimis sunt compositionis. Que, si vera sunt, quomodo rursus fucose ac puerilis diligentie? (86) Hec profecto, si aut mulieribus aut pueris aut veris Agasonibus sic dicerentur, tamen eis indigna viderentur. Tu qui te doctum putas, his gloriaberis. Ignorans, ignorans omnino es dicendi artis, Guarine! For the importance of the feminizing antitype, see pages 151-152.

⁷⁶ *Collectanea*, 401. (87) Nam et hanc invectivam, quamvis absonam et deiectam et tam verbis squalentem quam sentiis et argumentis puerilibus et repugnantibus sordidam, meliusculam tamen quam soleas edidisti. See note 86 for the rest of the section.

could not advance, as Agaso had done to him, through cultural stereotypes. He chides Guarino for assuming the errors in the *RLV* to be a sign of ignorance rather than assuming that Trebizond does, in fact, know “those things most familiar to children.”⁷⁷ The truth, Trebizond explains, is that his alleged errors were the fault of a copyist, “since it is impossible for a man to note down so great and so many volumes without error.” He suggests that the implicit assumption that he does not know what even boys know is itself a childish strategy, unjust, and an indication of Guarino’s *levitas*.

Aside from their explicit accusations of childishness, both Agaso and Trebizond incorporate the contrast between childishness and manliness in more complex, implicit arguments. The most prevalent of these involves the distinction between students (portrayed as poorly informed and childish) and instructors (portrayed as mature and manly). This distinction is evident in Agaso’s attempts to label Trebizond a false *magister* and childish upstart who challenges learned authorities, who are of course the true men.⁷⁸ Here too, we can perhaps see the impact of the fact that Trebizond was nearly twenty years younger than Guarino. Agaso condescendingly describes Trebizond as a

⁷⁷ *Collectanea*, 383-384. (12) Illud quale sit consideremus, quam leve ac puerile, ne Agasonium dicam, quo me carpis, quod non nulla in tanto codice minus Latine dicta te offendissent. Quid ais, Guarine? Si mea manu transcripta tam multa magnaue forent volumina in quibus litterarum quadam additione vel detractatione corruptius, que dicis, reperirentur, cogitatione scribentis alio rapta, “egritudinem” pro “egrotatione,” “ad presentiarum” pro “ad presens,” “exorditus” pro “exorsus,” “doctrinas” pro “doctrine,” ignorantie id signum putares? Nec vel gravitate orationis vel preceptorum multitudine, subtilitate, ordine motus, infantibus hec communissima nobis concederes? Adeo rudis atque agrestis es ut te fugiat accidere homini posse, quod plerumque tibi evenisse certior sum, ut querat quod teneat, postulet quod in manibus habeat? Nisi forte tu deus sis aut deum te credi velis? ... (13) Animadvertite igitur quam iniquus es: que si manu mea scripsissem, non ignorantie dares, hec aliena manu confecta mihi non pudet ingerere. Quod si ego quoque levitatem tuam sequendam ducerem, quam plurima huiusmodi ex tuis presto sunt! Nihil enim est integrum, nihil non absonum, nihil non barbare scriptum. Verum nos ita tibi omnia condonamus ut que fortassis etiam tu committis librariis. Tu, siquid in nostris transcriptorum culpa mendosum est, nobis attribuis. Nos etiam magna tibi vitio non damus. Tu minima hec et aliena non vereris colligere, quamvis et qui nostra, quod tot tantaque volumina impossibile sit absque lapsu hominem exarare, deprecari errorem, et qui tua transcribunt, librarii propter tuorum paucitatem iure in te reiicere culpam possunt, nisi tam breves epistolas scopulose orationis fastidio se affectos minus attendisse in transcribendo dicant.

⁷⁸ Chapter Two examines Agaso’s false *magister* argument as a part of his depiction of Trebizond as an arrogant Greekling who, though unqualified, purported to teach the art of speaking. See pages 40-45.

“young doctor” [*novellus doctor*].⁷⁹ He is a *magister* who, so that he might seem to contribute something of his own, added “so foolishly and stupidly ‘*cum amplificatione*’” to Cicero’s definition of demonstrative oratory.⁸⁰ He is a “Neptunian *magister*” who misunderstands the number of parts of an oration.⁸¹ He is a *magister* whose practices run counter to those of Servius, “no less an eloquent rhetor than a learned grammarian.”⁸² He is a “new Cicero, or chickpea” who creates thousands of new doctrines.⁸³ Agaso amplifies these insults by explicitly characterizing Trebizond not as a master, but as a student: “Therefore let the Greekling go and learn how to be a student, since he does not know how to be a teacher.”⁸⁴ Each of these is part of Agaso’s portrayal of Trebizond as arrogant and unlearned, particularly in contrast to true authorities.

Naturally, Trebizond responds to Agaso’s false *magister* argument by reversing roles and presenting himself as the learned instructor and Guarino as the student. To Agaso’s contention that he was an ungrateful student of Guarino’s Latin instruction, Trebizond recalls his lessons to Guarino on Pindar and Greek meter, lessons for which he

⁷⁹ *Collectanea*, 366. (7) ...quamquam quid dicet doctor ipse novellus, quod tot eruditos, peritos, suaves in dicendo tulit hec etas sine ipsius preceptione ut priscis illis haud dissimiles dixerim, sicut multifariam illorum scripta et dicta testantur?

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 366 (9). See note 64.

⁸¹ *Collectanea*, 366. (11) Inde non longe post Neptunius hic magister inventionem divisurus contra veterum omnium et posterorum auctoritatem atque sententiam, quattuor tantum partes enumerat, cum sex esse nemo sanus eat inficias. Sic enim partitur in exordium, narrationem, contentionem, et perorationem.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 370. (29) Accedit et Servius, non minus rhetor facundus quam grammaticus eruditus, qui in tertio Georgicorum commento: ‘scimus,’ inquit, ‘esse concessum scribentibus ut iteratione prohemii legentium reficiant interdum laborem,’ magis quam scriptoribus et lectorum, ut magister imperat Trapezuntius...

The passage is a part of Agaso’s response to Trebizond criticizing Guarino’s use of *scribentium* in his encomium. See note 36.

⁸³ *Collectanea*, (2) ...id est, doctrine doctrinas, et alia milia que novus hic Cicero, vel cicer, magis sua quadam usurpat inscitia? De nomine si queris, quod ad tuas aures pervenisse non arbitror, dicam postea.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 367. (15) Eat igitur Greculus ipse, et discipulus esse discat qui magister esse nescit. Alioquin dimidio stultiores redditurus est discipulos quam accepit. Et intercepta salaria revomenda.

claims Guarino was quite grateful. Trebizond's assertion is an important part of his defense against Agaso's anti-Greek language, but it also demonstrates his attempts to emasculate Guarino by placing him in the schoolroom. He describes his lessons on Pindar and meter as topics far more complex than those Guarino claimed he had taught Trebizond. He adds that Guarino had given him only those rudimentary lessons, "which women rather than men usually give," and had done so poorly.⁸⁵ Trebizond's verbal emasculation of Guarino is also evident in his contention that his criticisms in the *RLV* had improved Guarino's style. He suggests that as squalid and childish a piece as the Agaso invective was, it was still an improvement over Guarino's typical offerings. Here he implores the "noblest men, and finally whoever follows Guarino," to compare what they know of Guarino's past teachings and speech to what they hear now. They will find, he declares, that Guarino treats issues differently and writes more ornately and sweetly. "George made you more learned," he concludes, adding that the changes in Guarino's practices are "easily conferred on you by George's teaching."⁸⁶ Trebizond makes a

⁸⁵ Ibid., 398. (72) Vix duorum mensium illa tua fuit doctrina in transcribendo, non in discendo me penitus occupato, si tamen doctrina sit appellanda primorum elementorum confusa cognitio... Quo quidem tempore memini tibi Pindarum legenti ac a me petenti quidnam aut de illo poeta aut de metris suis sentirem, biduo me de metrorum omnium genere disseruisse, teque subinde flagitasse ut siquid haberem de his rebus, scriptis traderem quoniam tot tantaque memoria tenere non posses. Fecimus et obtulimus. (73) Videntur hec magna, preceptor, que abste accepimus? Communissima quedam, que femine magis quam viri monstrare solent, tradidisti. Oleum ac impensam amisisse quereris. Ego (ita me deus amet) pluris unicum ex his verbum que tibi de metris subieci quam universam illam elementorum cognitionem facio. Hoc enim vulgo habetur; illud antequam invenies, et oleum multum profecto et impensam expones. On Trebizond's spelling of *abs te* as *abste*, see Chapter Two, note 138.

This is another of the few times he feminizes Guarino, although again the characterization serves the same purpose as beast imagery or accusations of childishness, to demonstrate a lack of learning that is expected of men. On the trend in Renaissance studies to examine masculinity in opposition to femininity see page 151-152. The passage is also likely a slight against Guarino as a grammarian. For the changing perception of grammarians during the fifteenth century see Chapter Two, note 140.

⁸⁶ *Collectanea*, 401. (87) Nam et hanc invectivam, quamvis absonam et deiectam et tam verbis squalentem quam sentiis et argumentis puerilibus et repugnantibus sordidam, meliusculam tamen quam soleas edidisti. Quasobres tyrones omnes tuos et veteranos discipulos ego appello. Vos, vos, inquam, nobilissimi viri, quicumque tandem estis qui Guarinum sectamini, tenete, obsecro, memoria quecunque de arte Guarinus ad hunc usque diem vobis preceperit. Revolvite vobiscum que in dies audietis. Videbitis, mihi credite,

similar proclamation in a cover letter to Leonello d'Este that he appended to his *Responsio* to Guarino: "See, please, how much more honorable my actions are. I criticized Guarino rightly, as I see it...Indeed, I believe you noticed how much better he writes since he read the books of my Rhetoric."⁸⁷

For both Agaso and Trebizond, the instructor-student contrast emasculates an opponent by attacking his learning, but it is also a way to portray oneself as learned and manly. In other words, the instructor-student contrast allows one to argue "I know more than you, child" and to exhort someone with the knowledge of a child to "learn from me." The sparring in the Agaso and Trebizond letters is thus quite meaningful. Arguments regarding who taught whom, or who is even capable of teaching whom, are crucial points of contention over learning and reputation. The link between learnedness and masculinity is a means of expressing one's superiority and of situating two figures at different places in a clearly conceptualized hierarchy of manhood.

The instructor-student contrast also has a conspicuous place in Trebizond's feud with Poggio beginning in May 1452. The pivotal moment in that feud was the fight in the chancery, which began as Trebizond was speaking with a colleague and said something derogatory about Poggio, who was walking nearby. What he said likely dealt with his aid to Poggio in the Latin translations of Xenophon and Diodorus. A consistent contention of

pleraque a Guarino aliter atque antea vobis callidius subiici. Quod cum sentietis, siqua vobis cura veritatis est, exclamate illico: doctiorem te fecit Georgius, Guarine! Vos etiam appello qui eius aliqua scripta diligentius perlegistis. Si ornatius, gravius, suavius aut omnino meliuscule quicquam scripserit Guarinus quam nunc scribat, eam facilitatem preceptione Georgii sibi collatam arbitramini. Que si facietis, et veritatem magis quam Guarinum amabitis et eum ipsum licentius ac ardentius ad meliora dicendi studia incumbere facietis.

⁸⁷ Ibid., 380. (10) Vide, queso, quam honestiores mee partes sint. Carpsi Guarinum vere, ut puto. Id ei quoque ipsi perutile fuerat. Nam quam melius scribat ex quo meorum Rhetoricorum libros legit teipsum animadvertisse arbitror.

For the cover letter to Leonello, see Chapter One, page 5. I discuss the letter to Leonello in more detail below, pages 194-196.

Trebizond's correspondence during the feud is that he never received proper recognition or gratitude for his assistance. Writing to Poggio in January 1453, Trebizond complains that even though Poggio gained "both money and everlasting honor" from the translations, he expressed his thanks with a letter "in which you write that I am a man too little prudent and am provoked easily and without reason."⁸⁸ Writing to his son Andreas in June 1454, Trebizond declares that the translations were "completed by means of my instruction." "What greater service can be imagined," he asks, "than that which we bestowed by our work on Poggio?"⁸⁹ Trebizond laments again that he made Poggio "famous" by his labors, "a man ignorant of Greek letters, who composed nothing in Latin except the most shameful stories and some invectives." Poggio so lacked skill, he continues, that Trebizond had to supply him with "individual words as he would a

⁸⁸ Trebizond's letters during this dispute, with the exception of the June 1454 letter to his son Andreas quoted in the following note, are all found in Ernst Walser, *Poggius Florentinus: Leben und Werke* (Leipzig: Teubner, 1914), 501-515. His January 1453 letter to Poggio is in Walser, 501-504. For a brief overview of the Trebizond-Poggio conflict see page 96. The conflict is discussed at length in Chapter Three. Walser, 501. Nunc autem econtra si conscientiam tuam scrutaberis aut si ab universa Cancellaria apostolica quesieris maxima invenies beneficia in te a Georgio profecta fuisse. Quis enim eorum qui cum locum petere hunc solebant, ignorat et Xenophontem et Diodorum te magnis meis ex Graeco in latinum laboribus vertisse? Unde tibi et pecunia accessit et honor sempiternus. Quibus pro maximis beneficiis quid retulisti, edidisti epistolam que ad manus meas pervenit, ubi scribis parum me consultum hominem esse et leviter et absque ulla ratione moveri.

Trebizond is referring to Poggio's letter to Christopher Cauchus in September 1437, in which Poggio wrote that he thought Trebizond had acted inappropriately in writing his invective against Guarino earlier that year. Trebizond's criticism of Poggio in January 1453 is another indication of the public nature of humanist disputes. Trebizond is not accusing Poggio of writing an insulting letter to him, but of having written insultingly about him in a letter to another. Not only had Poggio heard about the Trebizond-Guarino dispute, he had discussed it with a friend via his personal correspondence which then itself circulated, making its way back to Trebizond. The letter to Cauchus is discussed below, pages 204-206.

⁸⁹ *Collectanea*, 117. (1) Nemo enim pene ignorat quot quantaque mea in Florentinum Pogium merita extiterint. Universa enim apostolica cancellaria testis est quotidianis laboribus meis tum Xenophonticam Cyri Disciplinam, tum Diodori Egyptiam Historiam e Greco in Latinum vel vertisse illum vel pervertisse: illud, quod institutionibus meis factum est, quantum fieri quinquennio spacio potuit; hoc, quia durum atque agrestem animum, ne in tam longo quidem temporis spacio, ad meliora reducere potui; Ibid., 123. (30) Quid autem maius excogitari potest quam quod nos opera nostra Poggio contulimus? Ignarum litterarum Grecarum hominem qui nihil Latine preter turpissimas conscripserat fabulas et invectivas quasdam, quo quasi ad sentinam omnium turpium verborum que melius re ipsa quam vocabulis novit multitudinem congegisset, perpetuum nostris laboribus fecimus. Unde non parvam quoque pecuniam et gratiam consecutus videtur. I discuss Trebizond's argument to Andreas about Poggio's debt in Chapter Three, pages 140-143.

child.”⁹⁰ As during the feud with Guarino, Trebizond challenges his opponent’s masculinity to demonstrate his own learning. Doing so allows him to strengthen his argument for the value of his aid and the debt Poggio owes him.

In both of Trebizond’s feuds, concepts of masculinity functioned as attempts to cast an opponent as unlearned. The purpose was to define an opponent—as a child, a woman, a fishmonger, or donkey-driver—in a way detrimental to the other’s attempts to cultivate a reputation. These definitions also expressed one’s own intellectual superiority. When Agaso cast Guarino as Trebizond’s instructor, when Trebizond boasted he improved Guarino’s style, or when Trebizond lamented his aid to Poggio, these were all expressions of one man’s dominance over another. Masculine language was an effective tool because humanists conceptualized an ideal man and set that ideal over and above a host of alternatives that represented in one way or another failed masculinity. Attacks against an opponent’s learning were only one avenue for demonstrating one’s superior reason, however. Equally significant were insults about an opponent’s moral conduct, in which immoral behavior was described as the result of a lack of reason and restraint.

The Moderate Man

Trebizond’s feuds with Guarino and Poggio illustrate how the humanist understandings of masculinity and restraint, indebted to the classical and medieval models discussed at the beginning of the present chapter, were fundamentally connected.⁹¹ Manhood was defined by the markers of restraint examined in Chapter

⁹⁰ *Collectanea*, 123. (31) Opera nostra et labore quinquenio pene sic abusus est, ut omnis id Romana curia sciat, ne ipse quidem summus pontifex ignoret, primo Xenophontis Pediam Cyri pervertisse illum, deinde Diodori Egyptiacam historiam, singula nobis verba illi sicuti puero ingerentibus.

⁹¹ For the tradition identifying reason and restraint as indicators of manhood see pages 156-164.

Three, including prudence, honesty, and forgiveness. The expectation was that the true man governed his emotions and used reason to identify and make virtuous choices. Defining an opponent as overly emotional and lacking restraint on the one hand and demonstrating one's own reasoned behavior on the other allowed an author to express his dominance over another. Like attacks against an opponent's learning, insults about conduct also situated individuals within a hierarchy of masculinity.

Perturbationes animi and Failed Masculinity

Trebizond's feud with Poggio is a natural place to begin an examination of masculinity and moderation. The fight in the chancery, Trebizond's use of the sword, and his imprisonment and expulsion from the chancery placed moral conduct squarely in the center of their dispute.⁹² In letters from Naples between January 1453 and June 1454, Trebizond was intent on proving that he, not Poggio, had acted moderately in the chancery and during the following two years. To do so, he constructed a detailed portrait presenting Poggio's behavior as lacking restraint and a result of "disturbances of the mind" [*perturbationes animi*]. The concept of *perturbationes animi*, used by Trebizond and his opponents either implicitly or explicitly, refers to the passions and stands in opposition to one's reasoning faculties.⁹³ It is a separate issue from learnedness, as it deals not with the rational capabilities associated with knowledge but with the exercise of reason in decision-making and in action. Trebizond's Naples correspondence begins by casting Poggio as the less rational of the two during the chancery fight, but over time his

⁹² Arguments about moral conduct certainly play an important role in the Trebizond-Guarino dispute as well. I suggest, though, that moral conduct plays an even more significant role thematically in the Trebizond-Poggio correspondence given the acts and accusations of physical violence and harassment in that feud. For this reason, I begin a discussion of conduct with the Trebizond-Poggio feud.

⁹³ The phrase has classical roots. See for instance Cicero's discussion of "disturbances of the mind," emotions, in books three and four of the *Tusculan Disputations*.

description of Poggio becomes far more negative. He describes Poggio as less rational, and more angry, jealous, and emotional in detailing the assassination plot to Poggio in March 1453 and the forged letter plot to his son Andreas in June 1454 than he had in his initial letters to Poggio and Nicholas V in January 1453. At the same time, his depiction of Poggio becomes increasingly dependent on imagery denoting failed masculinity. His attacks thus transition from allegations of immoderate, unjust behavior to accusations of an underlying childish character that completely lacks reason and thus manhood.

In his January 1453 letter to Poggio, Trebizond employs the language of masculinity to criticize Poggio's immoderate behavior at three critical points in his account of the chancery fight. The first occurs during Trebizond's description of the beginning of the fight. Angered by what Trebizond had said about him, Poggio shouted that he was lying and charged across the chancery to confront him. Trebizond's presentation of his response challenges Poggio's masculinity: "If only you had heaped up other things of this kind, I would have paid no mind. Instead, I would have listened to your slander with great patience, like a parent's."⁹⁴ Poggio, of course, did more than simply shout, and Trebizond then explains how he braced himself against the other's charge. Like the typical youth, Poggio's emotions impelled him to action. Trebizond deliberately contrasts his own restraint and patience, and thus manhood, by likening himself to a parent coping with a child's outbursts.

The second overt reference to masculinity occurs when Trebizond justifies his use of the sword in their fight—which had been a significant part of the decision rendered against him—by framing it as a rational act of self-defense. He argues that he intended to

⁹⁴ Walser, 502. *Quod certe non putavi ad aures tuas perventurum, audisti tamen et: Mentiri me magna voce respondisti. Utinam alia quoque huiusmodi conguessisses nihil ego penitus replicassem. Sed maledicta tua magno animo quasi parentis audissem.*

scare Poggio away with the weapon, and that he selected that course rather than to bite the man's fingers or crush his testicles, implying that he had chosen the least violent and most responsible method of ending the confrontation. He notes that his plan worked, for Poggio "immediately hurried away from that place like a Florentine woman in flight."⁹⁵ Feminization allows Trebizond to stress Poggio's inability to control his emotions, in this case his fear. The contrast between each man's decision-making process is notable too. If Poggio's emotional flight is womanish, Trebizond's rational thought-process is implicitly manly.

Trebizond returns to the contrast between man and child in the conclusion of his letter, adding that childish emotion is a sign of a bestial nature:

God knows, Poggio, I never intended to harm you. And for this reason I resolved to engage with you in letters now so that I might put aside my distress in writing and find peace. For believe me: If, provoked by your injuries against me, I imitate your bestial character, I shall not settle the matter as you have, like a child. Instead, I shall dispatch you without the least difficulty, even if you were far greater and far more powerful than I.⁹⁶

Trebizond labels Poggio's handling of their dispute as both bestial and childish to address the concept of rational self-control. He declares that he never intended to harm Poggio but implies that Poggio did mean him harm. The difference between the two rests in their respective characters, one bestial and childish, and the other indicative of the true man.

⁹⁵ Ibid., 503. Potui digitum in os immissum meum dentibus iure concidere: non feci. Venit in mentem, cum ego sederem et tu stares, utrisque manibus testes tuos comprimere ac te ita prosternere: non feci. Gladium a circumstantibus quesivi, ut eius timore te pellerem. Nec me fefellit opinio. Illico enim ut Florentina femina fuga inde te rapuisti. Quid ergo mali feci si gladium petii, ut te fugarem? This is another of Trebizond's few attempts to feminize his opponents. See pages 151-152 as well as pages 179-180 and 183 for additional examples.

⁹⁶ Walser, 503-504. Deus scit Poggi nunquam me induxisse animum ad nocendum tibi. Ac ideo literis modo agere tecum constitui, ut perturbatione animi in scribendo deposita quiescam. Nam crede mihi: si tuis iniuriis commotus bestialem animum tuum imitabor, non ut tu quasi puer rem ordinabo. Sed facillime te conficiam, si etiam multo maior atque potentior esses.

Trebizond's portrayal of Poggio's lack of manly moderation features prominently in his description of their relationship after the fight as well. His account of Poggio's *perturbationes animi* becomes an indication not of one instance of childish behavior, as when he let his emotions sweep him away in the chancery, but of a recurrent theme, and therefore of his intrinsically childish, and sometimes implicitly beast-like, character. Trebizond's allegations of childishness thus take on new features, and his verbal emasculation of Poggio becomes more pronounced. In his January 1453 letter to Nicholas V, Trebizond describes Poggio's relentless hostility, reporting his repeated efforts to send assassins to Naples to kill him. He never explicitly characterizes Poggio's actions or character as beast-like, but he attributes to him a cruelty and savagery that invokes that imagery. Trebizond builds an implicit argument that like an animal, Poggio lacks the rational capacity for restraint and his passions lead him to savage behavior.⁹⁷ Trebizond tells Nicholas that he left Rome after the chancery fight because he feared Poggio would "devise something more cruel and savage against me."⁹⁸ He cites Poggio's continued anger as the reason why the two never reconciled and why he fled the chancery again forty days after their fight—alleging that Poggio had turned the cardinals in the curia against him.⁹⁹ It was Poggio's arrogance—his *superbus animus*—that led him to send assassins to Naples on three occasions. Trebizond casts Poggio's failure to forgive, his

⁹⁷ For the link between beast imagery and cruelty, see Erica Fudge on Renaissance beasts, pages 158-160.

⁹⁸ The January 1453 letter to Nicholas V is in Walser, 504-506. Walser, 504. Ego sanct. Pater, nulla re alia magis istinc abii quam timore ne durities Poggii Florentini quicquam durius atque asperius adversus me innovaret.

⁹⁹ Ibid., 504-505. Deinde cum propter peccata mea nullus mihi aditus ad S.T. daretur nec aliquis cubicularius vellet me cum aliis secretariis admittere, post XL dies experiri volui si iam furor in me suos deferbuisset...Nam quoniam vidi animum eius implacabilem vidique nonnullos cardinales omnia dicere ac facere, que ipse vellet, magni animi esse putavi, cedere.

refusal to reconcile, and his continued harassment as signs of his immoderate nature and of the cruelty, arrogance, and obstinacy of his *animus*.¹⁰⁰

In the March 1453 letter to Poggio, Trebizond reiterates his portrayals of Poggio's *animus*, *perturbationes*, and failed manhood.¹⁰¹ He explains that he wrote to Nicholas about the assassination plot so the pope would help return Poggio to his senses. As Trebizond tells it, he feared Poggio's anger would lead him to resort to violence. The assertion is a criticism of Poggio's proclivity for childish, emotional, and violent outbursts. Trebizond underlines this allegation by recalling Poggio's feud with Lorenzo Valla, a "childish affair" [*puerilis res*] by Trebizond's estimation, during which Poggio threatened to murder Valla.¹⁰² Trebizond's depiction of the dispute as childish, alongside the claim that Poggio needed to come to his senses in their own feud, casts Poggio's immoderate, emotional actions as a function of his very nature. Against the backdrop of the Valla feud, Trebizond suggests, Poggio's childishness represents not an isolated incident or a momentary lapse of judgment but a flawed character.

Trebizond also finds evidence of Poggio's childish character in what he argues are the frequent contradictions in Poggio's February 1453 letter to him. Poggio composed his letter in response to Trebizond's two January letters, the one addressed to Poggio in which he reframed the chancery fight and the other addressed to Nicholas describing the alleged assassination plot. In March, Trebizond explains Poggio's February letter as a

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 505. His ergo rationibus libenter Poggio cessi, presertim cum non minus Rome quam hic essem peregrinus, sed non sufficiunt hec omnia Poggio. Nec semestri et ultra spatio temporis superbus hominis animus potui mitigari, sed mittit satellites hucusque ad occidendum me quam rem ter iam tentavit.

¹⁰¹ Trebizond's March 1453 letter to Poggio is in Walser, 506-515.

¹⁰² Walser, 512. An credis forsan immemorem me esse adeo ut non meminerim quando in re puerili vere in multis a Valla fuisses reprehensus: ita te exarsisse ut vitam eius extinguere constitueris?; Ibid., 512-513. Hac ergo de causa querelam ad pontificem detuli, ut et tuum ab insidiis animum et me a periculo liberarem. For a discussion of the Poggio-Valla feud, see Chapter Three, pages 135-139.

sign of its author's *perturbationes animi*.¹⁰³ He notes the supposed inconsistency between Poggio's denials that he had ever written anything derogatory about Trebizond and his admission that he had once rebuked Trebizond's conduct during the Guarino affair.¹⁰⁴ He asks of Poggio—sarcastically referring to him as a “most learned and prudent man”—whether this is not a clear contradiction and suggests such an obvious inconsistency was the result of Poggio having been “stirred up, like a child or a reed blown by the wind.” If Poggio had written consistently like a man, he argues, he would not have to instruct him as he would instruct a child.¹⁰⁵ Trebizond presents Poggio's inconsistency as an indication of a fundamental disconnect between what Poggio's conscience tells him is the truth, that he had disparaged Trebizond, and what he claims to be the truth. It is an

¹⁰³ Walser, 513. Non videtur mihi possibile, Poggi sic posse quemquam loqui et maxime litteris deditum nisi duplici turbatione insaniat. Nam cum animus modo huc modo illuc varietate turbationum feratur, tunc necessario verba etiam que imago animi sunt herere inter se non possunt. Certe verba inconstantissima sunt et aliena penitus ab omni humanitate, que modo huc modo alio tendentia turbationes animi produunt, conscientiam occidendi hominis bene de te meriti cupiditatem, qua fiebat ut dum licere quasi tibi sperares scriptis te contendere nolle diceres, indignationem quoniam animum tuum explere nequis timore pontificis. Que ita esse satis iam tuarum litterarum furore mihi produntur.

¹⁰⁴ Cf. Poggio's February 1453 letter in *Poggii Epistolae*, ed. T. Tonelli, 3 vols. (Florence, 1832-1861), 3:49-52. Tonelli's edition is reprinted in Poggio, *Opera Omnia*, vol.3, *Epistolae* (Turin: 1964). I cite Poggio's sources as *Poggii Epistolae*. *Poggii Epistolae*, 3:49. Ego nihil umquam, quod jure te deberet offendere, contra te egi; non verbo, non litteris tibi unquam detraxi; non commodis tuis unquam obstiti...Arguis me ob rem antiquam, quod olim scripserim in quadam epistola, te nominans, parum bene consulti hominis videri; idque in tuam contumeliam scriptum putas. Poggio's letter about the Trebizond-Guarino affair to Cauchus in September 1437 and his February 1453 letter to Trebizond are discussed below, pages 204-206.

¹⁰⁵ Walser, 508-509. Sed mirum est quomodo nunquam te modo litteris detraxisse scribis, deinde paucis interiectis, sicut insanus, scripsisse te olim in me fateris. Semel enim scripsisse et nunquam scripsisse contradicunt o vir doctissime tu atque prudentissime? Ignosce mihi oro si, quicquam apertius in te dico. Res enim ipse ita cogunt facere. Nam si tu constanter ut vir scripsisses, neque ut puer aut calamus vento concussus agitareris, nec ego quasi puerum docens hoc docendi genere uterer. Culpa ergo tua est, qui repugnantia scribis, non mea, qui levitatem scriptorum tuorum aperiens congruis cogor nonnumquam verbis exclamare.

Trebizond's use of the reed analogy may be a biblical reference. Cf. Matt 11:7 and Luke 7:24. Vergerio and Piccolomini also use this language in discussing emotions and inconstancy. See pages 162-163. Vergerio writes that instructors should help prevent youths from “being bent over by their own weight,” perhaps their own character, “or by the wind,” by circumstance and their emotional responses.

example of how Poggio's emotions impel him to dissimulation—he was “stirred up”—and therefore of a childish lack of rational self-control.

Trebizond's strategies during the dispute with Poggio are strikingly similar to those Agaso and Trebizond used in the earlier Trebizond-Guarino feud. Both individuals made ample use of the links between moderation and manhood on the one hand and *perturbationes animi* and failed manhood on the other. Agaso does not explicitly refer to *perturbationes animi* in casting Trebizond as an arrogant assailant of rhetorical authorities, but he does portray him as a slave to his emotions. At times, this argument contains an anti-Greek component. Asking his reader if he wants to know “who he is who so demolishes men deceased and living,” Agaso identifies Trebizond as a Cretan and suggests that a Cretan “is a liar, an evil beast [*mala bestia*].”¹⁰⁶ The likening of Cretans to beasts leads into a discussion of Trebizond's dishonorable and emotional behavior. Here Agaso recalls a story of how Trebizond had slandered Guarino in the presence of Guarino's former students. Hearing these men praise their instructor, Trebizond was furious. Agaso indicates Trebizond's emotional upheaval by describing him as *animosus*. Trebizond then disparaged Guarino, who was not present, and “vomited forth these slanderous statements against him.” Trebizond's actions were the result of his emotions: he was “vexed by the stings of jealousy and incensed by the flames of rivalry.”¹⁰⁷ In light

¹⁰⁶ *Collectanea*, 368. (19) Scire vis quisnam is est qui sic mortuos ac viventes exossat homines? E Creta dudum advectus, quo pruna et cotana, vento. (20) De cuius insule hominibus et eorum ingenio tacebo ipse, ne homini litterato conviciari videar, sed beatum Paulum audies, qui acceptum ab vetusto poeta versum hexametrum de illis breviter explicat: “Cretensis mendax, mala bestia, segnis, et alvus.” Cf. Titus, 1:12.

¹⁰⁷ *Collectanea*, 368-369. (22) Tum frequentes ad eum, ut ad pharmacopolam, auditores accurrebant, recentem adhuc Guarini cum caritate memoriam disciplinamque retinentes. Proinde audire erat varias de Guarino predicationes: alius prudentiam, ille comitate conditam gravitatem, nonnulli ingenium et legendi suavitatem ac evidentiam, quidam scribendi facundiam nec minus orandi dulcedinem extollebant, cum ex eius lingua, ut de Nestore dixit Homerus, melle dulcior flueret oratio. Quas ob laudes animosus in primis homo Trapezuntius eum sibi parem ferre non valens absentis honori detractare cepit et invidie stimulis

of the preceding passage suggesting such behavior is typical of Cretans, Agaso is clearly saying that Trebizond's dishonorable behavior was beast-like.

Agaso follows his depiction of Trebizond as a Cretan beast slandering Guarino with a characterization of Trebizond's behavior as childish. Here he argues that Trebizond should recant what he had written about Guarino. Claiming Trebizond was too ashamed to do so, Agaso maintains that to recant is not only right but the proof of a good man [*vir bonus*] who corrects error rather than persisting in it. Trebizond could prove himself a good man by recanting, since, as Agaso explains, the path to good *mores* is "never too late." To emphasize the point, he appeals to Cicero, who in *De oratore* cast aside his earlier *De inventione*: "But to return to the point, does not Cicero castigate his own errors and correct his writings...?"¹⁰⁸ Agaso's appeal to an author correcting the errors of his youth portrays Trebizond in a childish light. Like a child, Trebizond wrote "unfinished and crude essays"—a description consistent with Agaso's assault on the *RLV*—and in this case, also shameful insults. He is clearly not a good man, at least by Agaso's estimation. To correct one's errors, particularly the errors of youth, is evidence of manhood. Instead, Trebizond, driven by emotion and shame, refused to recant and proved himself a boy.

agitatus et emulationis facibus incensus ista in eum maledicta scriptis evomuit... Agaso is reporting a story he claims was told to him by an unnamed patrician. See Chapter Two, page 50-51.

¹⁰⁸ *Collectanea*, 369. (23) "Cur," inquam, "Trapezuntius probra non retractat cum maius viri boni argumentum sit sese ab errato detertere quam in errato perstare, et nunquam sera sit ad bonos mores via?" "Verecundia," inquit, "impedimento est et, cum tot exscripta sint sue Rhetoric volumina, emendandi labor." "Alia quaedam via restat," dixi, "ut parvam per epistolam impia revocet mendacia, que in ipsum tandem conviciatorem retundentur. An quispiam existimet, cum tot etiam docti quidem viri auditores Guarini vigeant, hac impunita relicturos esse maledicta, quin par pari referant quod Trapezuntium remordeant? Sed, ut redeam, nonne Cicero propria interdum castigat errata et per lapsum etatis scripta saniore lima corrigit, que, ut ait ille, 'pueris aut adolescentulis nobis aut ex commentariolis nostris incohata aut rudia exciderunt'? Cf. Cic., *De or.* 1.5.

Trebizond, like Agaso, expresses his arguments via the connection between *perturbationes animi* and failed masculinity. One of his most consistent contentions is that Guarino used the Agaso pseudonym in an inherently dishonorable and childish way and that his emotions compelled him to do so. In the cover letter to Leonello, he comments that Guarino's response to the *RLV*'s criticisms, the Agaso letter, was unwarranted. He describes Guarino as "agitated against me more than is proper for a learned man [*doctus vir*]" and motivated "by an excessive perturbation of the soul" "to feign a fight under the name Agaso."¹⁰⁹ Trebizond maintains the argument in the letter to Guarino, albeit without explicit reference to *perturbationes animi*. By attacking "not openly under your own name...but secretly and timidly" as Agaso, Trebizond explains, "you attacked too childishly and attacked yourself more than me."¹¹⁰ He adds later that Guarino adopted the pseudonym because he "cannot endure George's eloquence, at whose force of speaking you have now long trembled."¹¹¹

Trebizond's portrayal of Guarino's childish emotional response to the *RLV* stands in contrast to how he describes his own reasonable and therefore manly treatment of Guarino. The strategy is similar to how he later reframes the chancery fight with Poggio.

¹⁰⁹ *Collectanea*, 378. (1) Credo eum nimia perturbatione animi, quoniam genus orationis sue in Rhetoricis carpsimus, non vidisse quid sibi accidere posset si pugnam sub Agasonis nomine dissimularet. Ego id, etsi magis quam doctum virum deceat in me commotus sit et indignum quocum certet putaverit, tamen cum sui ipsius causa (est enim clarus vir) tum et maxime reverentia erga te mea, quoniam eum non parvi facis, condonare sibi constitui.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 381. (1) Postquam vero ad me tua oratiuncula vix delata est, non his que scripsimus tantum, hoc est, communi utilitati, indigne detrahi, sed librorum quoque auctorem contumeliis peti abste iniuria perspexi, quodque iniquissimum est et tibi vel tuorum iudicio turpissimum, non tuo in me aperte sed, ne commodius me defendam, occulte ac timide sub Agasonis nomine invectus es. Acriter quidem, ut tu putas; ut vero ii sentiunt qui hoc altius intelligunt, pueriliter nimis ac in te magis quam in me, Guarine, invectus es.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, 382. (5) Vident enim omnes atque intelligunt versute sic te inscripsisse quoniam orationem Georgii ferre non posses, cuius vim dicendi iam exhorruisses. Itaque credidisse te aiunt, si nomine inaudito scriberes, vel nil scripturum Georgium vel, si ad te scriberet, deum hominesque testari posses magnam tibi horum omnium ignaro iniuriam fieri.

In both cases, he emasculates his opponents by emphasizing their emotions and presents his own masculinity by relating his reasoned moderation. Trebizond maintains that he never insulted Guarino but had always honored him.¹¹² In the cover letter to Leonello, he argues that Guarino will never convince anyone that Trebizond had provoked him. Instead, he claims that his grievous offense was that “although we commended him to posterity as an honest and learned man [*probus et doctus vir*],” he did not yield to Guarino alone the composition of eloquence. Trebizond’s portrayal focuses on his opponent’s purported arrogance and is hardly flattering. Trebizond continues to explain to Leonello the difference between himself and Guarino, noting that it was his “considerable esteem for the man” that led him to limit his censures of Guarino’s encomium.¹¹³ Far from having provoked the other man, Trebizond proclaims that he actually exercised restraint in his criticisms.

In each of these passages, Trebizond also hints at his changing perception of Guarino. He once thought Guarino to be a good, honest, and learned man—and he places an emphasis on the *vir*—but Guarino’s emotion-driven behavior has led him to believe otherwise. Writing to Guarino, whom Trebizond claims he believed “to be a good man [*bonus vir*] and learned,” Trebizond explains that he initially refused to believe Guarino had “condemned those books [the *RLV*] that we wrote.”¹¹⁴ Later he defends the criticisms

¹¹² For Agaso’s various accusations that Trebizond slandered Guarino see pages 192-193.

¹¹³ *Collectanea*, 378. (2) Non enim quia carpsimus iure se unquam commotum cuiquam persuadebit, nisi adversarius taceat. Nam cum ipsum et probum et doctum virum posteritati commendaverimus, compositionem solam orationis sue doctrine idoneam non concessimus. ...Non eram adhuc reprehendendus si ita locutus sum ut et sensi et sentio, presertim cum maiora sui gratia tacuerim et minima que ad propositum de compositione orationis scribenti occurrerant perstrinxerim. For the preceding text, see note 109.

¹¹⁴ *Collectanea*, 381. (1) Cum multorum sermonibus iam ante percrebuisset eos libros quos de ratione dicendi conscripsimus non verbis te solum, ut prius, verum etiam scriptis vehementius improbare, quamvis

in the *RLV* as an acceptable scholarly practice and argues that “this can happen to men more learned than [Guarino]...[and] does not indicate for certain a lack of skill in Guarino’s speaking.” Guarino’s response, however, was decidedly unreasonable. The criticisms “vexed” him, and he “becomes inflamed, he becomes angry.”¹¹⁵ These arguments establish two personas. Guarino appears passionate and irrational, a nature that leads him to childishly adopt the Agaso pseudonym, while Trebizond appears reasonable and even respectful.

Trebizond further advances the contrast between himself and Guarino with a passage that is highly sarcastic, more than a little arrogant, and that contains some of the most overtly masculine language in the letter. He suggests that he ought to treat his dispute with Guarino like the play fighting he engages in with his two little sons, during which “I turn over my weapons so they may attack their unarmed father more boldly, I think I ought to do the same with you, an inarticulate child in speaking.” “Behold how I tremble,” Trebizond continues, rebuking Guarino’s immoderate behavior, “You become angry. I teach you. You slander me. I suffer you.” Just as he arms his children, Trebizond urges Guarino—an inarticulate child—to “read our books about elocution” and to find the weapons of the orator with which he can then attack Trebizond.¹¹⁶ The passage is as

non satis credidi te, quem bonum virum et doctum putabam, ea vilipendere, que et multi et clari viri precipuis laudibus efferunt, tamen tanto maiore tue vidende orationis cupiditate ardebam quanto melius de tua eruditione faciebam iudicium. Nam quoniam me hominem esse qui errare facile ac decipi posset cognosco, tua doctrina (que utinam fame respondeat!) revocari ab erratis cupiebam. For the rest of the passage, see note 110.

¹¹⁵ *Collectanea*, 404. (97) Verum unum illud velim mihi respondeat. Immutavi non nulla suorum in melius. Quod et doctoribus quam ipse sit hominibus accidere potest. Quare id imperitiam in dicendo Guarini certo signo non indicat. Momordit hec res eum. Tumescit, irascitur, pati non potest.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 404. (98) Tu te ipsum defendis et leviora persequeris. Letale hoc fame existimationisque tue telum ne quidem unico verbo avertere audes. Erat enim maiorum virium huius loci, quam tue sunt, deprecatio atque depulsio, quam ego tibi nunc adaperiam ut te recte queas tutari. Nam quod sepe cum filiis ludendi causa nostris facimus ut ad pugnandum nobiscum incitemus, tela nostra eis concedimus quibus in inermes

evocative as Trebizond's contrast between himself, the virile knight, and Guarino, seated upon an ass.¹¹⁷ Like that contrast, it firmly defines the identities of each combatant, one as masculine and the other not. It also builds upon one of Trebizond's major recurring arguments, that he, not Guarino, is the true knowledgeable man. Trebizond again strikes the pose of the instructor, exhorting Guarino, whom he again thrusts into the role of student and child, to learn from him.

Trebizond's language of masculine conduct is also a key part of his assertion that Guarino had acted dishonorably in claiming himself to be Trebizond's Latin instructor.¹¹⁸ Trebizond's assertion contains some of the most expressive and vitriolic language in the letter, particularly during his apostrophe to Vittorino da Feltre, whom he credits as his true instructor. Reframing the terms of the dispute, Trebizond suggests that Guarino's attacks on him are by extension attacks on Vittorino. He calls upon Vittorino to defend and protect what is his, the credit for Trebizond's instruction. Trebizond notes Guarino's belief that since he taught Trebizond a few of the basics of the language, Trebizond "imbibed [from him] the knowledge of all the advanced issues as well."¹¹⁹ On

nos audatius irruant, id mihi tecum puero in dicendo atque infanti faciundum censeo. Vide quam perhorrescam. Irascaris. Ego te doceo. Maledicis. Ego te fero. Insurgere cupis. Congredi et luctari non potes. Ego pedem confer et armis te instruo. Quod in te misimus telum evitare vis. Non potes. Taces. Nullam de hoc facis mentionem ne ulcus, quod curare diffidis, exagites. (99) Non vides remedium, quod unicum est. Confundere te omnia temeritate diximus: quid forense dicendi genus, quid quietum, quid historicum unica verborum parte ignorare te penitus. Si calumniati sumus, tu de his dissere breviter quomodo hec fiant. Si declarasses, me quoque ipsum penitisset tale in te ementitum fuisse. Non facis quoniam ignoras. Admonuimus que sint arma. Que si invenire cupis, de elocutione libros nostros lege.

¹¹⁷ See page 176.

¹¹⁸ Chapter Two examines Trebizond's claim as a response to the anti-Greek language of the Agaso letter. See pages 75-77.

¹¹⁹ *Collectanea*, 398. (74) Sed te nunc appello, Victorine. Defende ac protege partes tuas. Siquid Latine lingue in me est, te doctore post deum est. Insurgit Guarinus et, quoniam prima elementa monstravit, maiorum quoque rerum scientiam se duce nos imbibisse proclamat. Habes multos testes patritios ac integerrimos homines qui te illis temporibus Venetiis adolescentes audiebant, quibus audaciam huius monstri facile comprimis. Habes omnes huius florentissime urbis claros litteris viros quibus ora exertantis

the contrary, Vittorino has “many witnesses, patricians and the most honorable men [*integri homines*]” who can attest to Vittorino’s instruction of Trebizond, “by means of whom you will easily subdue the audacity of this monster [*monstrum*],” “by which you will beat back the speech of this clear Charybdis,” and the “firm reputation of so many years...with which you will crush the hard face of that monster [*prodigium*] as though against a stone.” The monster imagery and violent language is a much heightened form of expression compared to Trebizond’s likening of Guarino to an ass or a donkey-driver elsewhere. The image also contrasts strongly with the honorable and good men described as witnesses on Vittorino’s behalf. Trebizond continues, repeating to Vittorino that Guarino “struggles to claim your glory...for himself” by stealing credit for Trebizond’s Latin instruction.¹²⁰ He calls upon Vittorino to defend him from Guarino and to lay claim to Trebizond and therefore to his rightful glory. In doing so, he positions himself as defending Vittorino and casts himself as a son protecting his father’s glory.¹²¹ Beyond this, Trebizond links Guarino’s monstrous behavior to madness [*amentia*] and asks Vittorino to castigate his impudence, obstinacy, arrogance, temerity, and shamelessness. The passage contains all the hallmarks of failed masculinity. Guarino is compelled by envy and *amentia*, not reason, to impudent, brash, and obstinate behavior. He is not a

huius Charybdis contundes. Habes tot annorum constantem famam, quod ego semper non discipulus modo, sed filius tuus habitus sum, qua duram huius prodigii faciem sicuti saxo collides. This passage and the ones in notes 120 and 122 are consecutive.

¹²⁰ Ibid., 398. (75) Guarinus tibi magis quam mihi invidet. Imo vero tibi soli hoc loco iniuriatur. Tuam enim in se, non meam, transferre gloriam nititur. Ego, Grecus homo, Latinas didici litteras. A quo nihil ad me. Quanto ab imperitioribus didicerim, tanto mihi maior laus debetur, si bene didici. Ego te Guarino doctiorem et quidem multum duco, vel potius te doctissimum, illum ignorantissimum. Si fallor, mea hec est culpa. Nihil ad modestiam tuam. Illud dico: maiori mihi futurum laudi, si bene Latinitatem teneo, cum a Guarino, non abste me doctum dixeris. Mentiri non est meum. Tacere honeste possum. Non taceo. Pietate in te mea cogor, qua non aliter ac parentem sancte te colui.

¹²¹ The relationship between instructor and student was of vital importance to early modern educators, as discussed above, pages 160-164. See also the discussion in Chapter Two, pages 71-73 of how instructors were to function *in loco parentis*.

man but a monster. Trebizond also cautions Vittorino with an explicit image that identifies what is at stake in all of this. If Vittorino does not castigate Guarino and forsakes his student, others would likely be “torn to pieces by your courteousness.” “If you had fathered sons,” he asks, “would you leave them to rapacious wolves? Would you not protect them?”¹²²

The apostrophe to Vittorino is Trebizond’s attempt to establish himself as the arbiter of Guarino’s humanity. The savagery he ascribes to Guarino, the rapacious wolf, is an attempt to strip his opponent of his reason and depict him as other than a man and other than human. This is a substantial challenge to Guarino’s moral conduct and masculinity. He is not simply mildly censuring Guarino but exploiting the Renaissance anxiety about man and beast essentially to dehumanize Guarino.¹²³ It is an indication that, at times, humanist challenges regarding masculinity could stand as attempts to annihilate an opponent’s masculine status and impose upon him another. It is also likely that classical satire influenced Trebizond’s language. Satirical tropes such as monsters were naturally suited to humanist invective and the denigration of one’s opponents.¹²⁴ In depicting Guarino as a monster, Trebizond raises the stakes for each of the main figures

¹²² *Collectanea*, 398-9. (76) Tu tacebis et Guarini amentiam non redargues tua rapientis, si non re, at minis, litteris, nuntiis? Si de hoc, cum ipso non egeris, si de hoc non questus fueris, si tantam huius impudentiam non castigabis, si contumaciam, si arrogantiam non infinges atque retundes, cave ne omnes quos doces facilitate tua distrahantur. O confidentiam hominis inauditam! O temeritatem incredibilem! Quod multi sciunt—multi? quin vero omnes ferme qui me cognoscunt et te, Victorine, in se transferre impudens homo conatur hinc atque illinc per maiorem invective partem. Hoc in loco moratur. Preceptorem se Georgio fuisse mentitur. Tu veritatem tacebis ac me desereres? Si liberos genuisses rapientibus traderes lupis? Non protegeres? Natura impulses, dices? Nunc quos doctrina filios tibi peperisti, qui, cum liberi non sunt, liberis etiam ipsis, maxime si quicquam de se pollicentur magni, cariores atque iocundiores esse solent, destitues et parvipendes?

¹²³ See the scholarship on Renaissance beasts discussed above, pages 158-160.

¹²⁴ Maria Plaza notes that Juvenal’s satires “are swarmed with monsters” which add “a touch of the literally inhuman and supernatural” and heighten the author’s indignation against particular individuals or vices. Plaza, 305-310.

in his apostrophe to Vittorino. The Charybdis reference amplifies Guarino's savagery, audacity, and passions, which Trebizond describes as substantial a breach of good conduct as the Charybdis is a dreadful monster. The Charybdis raises the stakes for Vittorino as well, a man Trebizond describes as his intellectual father and portrays in an heroic manner: Vittorino should smash the monster's head against the rocks, lest others be torn to pieces by his courteous refusal to act and the unchecked appetite of the rapacious wolf. Vittorino's actions would not only protect Trebizond but also others whom the monstrous Guarino might otherwise savage. The imagery casts Vittorino as the hero of the story and furthers Trebizond's depiction of himself as the victim. He presents himself not as the victim of mundane insults but of attacks so reprehensible they can only be adequately expressed in mythical terms.

One final observation remains: Trebizond employs the imagery of failed masculinity to accuse Guarino of *levitas*. Chapter Two examined the concept of *levitas* as a key component in the classical Roman model for anti-Greek language upon which Agaso drew in attacking Trebizond's Greekness. Trebizond struggled with Agaso's accusations of *levitas* and looked for ways to turn those charges back against Guarino. Surely, charges of *levitas* were not limited to attacks against Greeks. As a term of disapproval, *levitas* could be and was wielded against Italians as well, as Trebizond himself does. Against Greeks however, *levitas* carried the added weight of long-standing cultural biases that provided Italian authors modes of expression to which Trebizond did not have access. Agaso could criticize Trebizond's Greekness as the reason for his poor moral conduct. Trebizond could accuse an Italian of *levitas*, but lacked the ability to make the charge through the kinds of ethnic slurs in the Agaso letter. The language of

failed masculinity offered Trebizond an alternative means of charging Guarino with *levitas* and its attendant concepts—arrogance, dishonesty, obstinacy, and the like.

Trebizond’s strategy is explicit when he attacks Guarino for nitpicking errors in the *RLV* that he contends were the fault of copyists. “Let us consider how dishonorable [*leve*] and childish [*puerile*]” this tactic is, Trebizond states, adding that if he himself “followed after your *levitas*,” he could find many such examples in Guarino’s writings. Worse, those would be due to the author’s incompetence, not the copyist’s.¹²⁵ Nearly all of the moral failings Trebizond attributes to Guarino—hiding behind the Agaso pseudonym, attacking a man who had commended him to posterity, being envious of Vittorino and falsely claiming Trebizond as his own student—are presented as indications of Guarino’s *levitas*. In the above passage, that dishonorable behavior is defined as an indication of *levitas* and childishness. Trebizond later argues similarly, though implicitly, when criticizing Guarino for attacking Greece: “But if Greece had deserved well from any Italian, from you certainly it had deserved the best, you who, if you had not been instructed by Greeks, would have languished in the dark. Do you, faultless man [*integer homo*], reprove the *levitas*, the deceit of the Greeks?”¹²⁶ Guarino is neither faultless nor a true man because of his hypocrisy. His actions prove his *levitas* and reveal him to be a child, a rapacious wolf, and a Charybdis.

¹²⁵ See pages 180-181.

¹²⁶ *Collectanea*, 406. (107). Verum huc loci factus, non possum non dolere quod in Greciam homo tu omnium, in Greciam, omnium bonarum artium inventricem, in Greciam, deorum olim domicilium, non Iovis dico et Iunonis (non ad fabulas refugio), sed multorum heroum et sanctorum virorum (sive vetustissimos ac remotissimos a nostra etate consideres sive nostre, idest, vere, religionis cultores, quos numero plures, doctrinis subtiliores, eloquentia graviores, moribus probatiores, religione sanctiores quam ex reliquo terrarum orbe invenies), in Greciam, inquam, unus omnium, quo te inscribis nomine dignissimus, in Greciam inveheris. Atqui si de aliquo Italo bene merita est Grecia, de te certe optime est, qui, nisi a Grecis institutus fuisses, in tenebris iacuisses. Levitatem, fallaciam integer tu homo Grecie increpas?

The preceding discussion indicates how humanists used the tropes associated with children, beasts, monsters, and women as verbal weapons to express arguments about moral rectitude and immoderate behavior. These authors not only used these strategies against one another, but, as examined in the first half of this analysis, often chafed at having them used against themselves. There is at times an almost palpable anxiety in this correspondence about being cast and perceived as less than a man. That anxiety speaks to an aspect of humanist masculinity that deserves further attention: its inherent instability. The way these authors talk about manhood suggests that they understood it to be a contested and negotiated part of one's public identity and believed it could be lost, won, gained, and regained through interactions with others.

Masculinity Lost, Masculinity Regained

The notion that masculinity could somehow be lost is evident in the letters of each of the authors of these two feuds, who use the idea in their acts of self-presentation. The underlying assumption in these strategies is that actions demonstrate manhood or, alternatively, that manhood is contingent upon actions. Immoderate, irrational behaviors certainly indicate unmanly conduct but can also indicate a loss of manhood itself, most often portrayed as the result of out-of-control *perturbationes animi*.¹²⁷ Trebizond expresses these ideas when he argues to Guarino and Leonello that he had always thought of Guarino as a “good man and learned” and an “honest and learned man.”¹²⁸ As Trebizond asserts throughout the response to Guarino, though, his estimation of the other had changed because of what he perceived to be the unjust attacks of the Agaso letter. He

¹²⁷ See the scholarship regarding Renaissance beasts, which argues a similar position, pages 158-160.

¹²⁸ See pages 195-196.

now viewed Guarino not as a man, but as a child, beast-like, and so forth. Agaso similarly claims that Guarino continues to honor Trebizond because he does not know of Trebizond's attacks against him. He says that when Guarino finds out that Trebizond is a "deceitful brigand," his opinion of the man will change—perhaps Guarino might even consider Trebizond less of a man—and he will be roused to defend himself.¹²⁹ In each case, Agaso and Trebizond suggest that masculinity was contingent on actions.

Poggio articulates a comparable, though far more measured, argument about the contingency of manhood in his comments to Christopher Cauchus regarding the Trebizond-Guarino dispute. Written in 1437, that letter long predates Poggio's conflict with Trebizond. Poggio was simply a bystander offering his perspective on the controversy. He writes that he believes Trebizond's treatment of Guarino was not that of a prudent man nor was it suitable of a man of his learning. He adds that Trebizond acted rashly by assuming Guarino had written the Agaso letter—an assumption Poggio claims was baseless—and then composing such a virulent response. Poggio's comments are notable because of how he qualifies his criticism. He makes clear that he still believes Trebizond to be a "most learned man and exceedingly eloquent" and that he wishes only that Trebizond had "spent his effort on a more honorable endeavor."¹³⁰ On the one hand

¹²⁹ *Collectanea*, 371-372. (36) "Plura refellenda restabant, viri patricii, que Guarino remittenda sunt. Namque ut ea rescierit, suam rem, si mihi audierit, suo, ut dicitur, marte decernet. Is enim, horum ignarus omnium, Trapezuntium commendare non desinit, ab quo et laudes expectare debuit, cum interim insidiosi more latronis Trapezuntius suum preceptorem, suum, inquam, preceptorem excipit incautum et maledictis insectatur."

¹³⁰ The letter to Cauchus is in *Poggii Epistolae*, 2:125-128. *Poggii Epistolae*, 2:127. Trapezuntium vero doctissimum video hominem, et admodum eloquentem, cujus scripta mihi admodum placent. Sed mallet eum impendisse operam in causa magis honesta, magisque accomodata ad explicandas ingenii vires. Conjectura vult assequi, ut Guarinus auctor et scriptor extiterit epistolae conscribendae. At hoc neque me iudice, neque quovis alio, qui recte Guarinum norit, unquam probabit, cum absint plurimum a scripturis suis; scribere tam multis verbis, tam contumeliose, tanquam in reum manifesti criminis, de quo nihil afferas praeter opinionem quamdam, et quidem ab aliorum opinione et sententia disjunctam, non recte consulti hominis esse videtur.

Poggio acknowledges Trebizond's learning, one aspect of manliness, and on the other hand he expresses concern about Trebizond's behavior, another aspect of manliness. Although he considers Trebizond's actions unjust, he does not claim they amount to a loss of masculine status. The links between prudence, restraint, and manhood essentially force him to clarify that he does not consider Trebizond's actions unmanly, just an instance of inappropriate behavior. I suspect Poggio so carefully phrased his comments because of how often authors expressed allegations of imprudence and the like by the language of failed masculinity, allegations which could be construed *ipso facto* as attacks against another's manhood. Poggio, as an outside observer of the Trebizond-Guarino dispute, had no real reason in 1437 to make a stronger attack against Trebizond's behavior by impugning his masculinity, a strategy he would later employ during their own dispute in 1453.

Unsurprisingly Poggio articulates a much different estimation of Trebizond's masculinity in his response to Trebizond's account of the chancery fight and alleged assassination plot in February 1453.¹³¹ Although less explicit than Trebizond's arguments against Guarino, Poggio now strongly implies that he thinks Trebizond less of a man because of his behavior. Protesting that he had "never done anything hostile" to Trebizond, that "neither orally nor in writing have I ever disparaged you," and that he has "never stood in the way of your interests," Poggio claims instead that "I thought highly of you as a learned man."¹³² Both the denial that he had provoked his opponent and the

¹³¹ Poggio's February letter is discussed at length in Chapter Three. Trebizond's response to it in March 1453, as well as Trebizond's letters to Poggio and Nicholas in January 1453, which were the occasions for Poggio's February reply, are discussed above, pages 187-192.

¹³² *Poggii Epistolae*, 3:49. Ego nihil unquam, quod jure te deberet offendere, contra te egi; non verbo, non litteris tibi unquam detraxi; non commodis tuis unquam obstiti, sed dilexi ut virum doctum usque ad eam diem, qua tu acceptam de communi pecuniam per fraudem denegasti, quae nostri discidii causa fuit.

counter claim regarding his high esteem for him are similar to what Trebizond had written about Guarino. Poggio continues to deny having provoked Trebizond by appealing to the hypothetical “good man”: “I never planned anything regarding you that ought to displease you... or any good man.” The argument casts Trebizond as unreasonable, but the appeal to “any good man” also implicitly portrays him as unmanly. A good man would not be upset by Poggio’s conduct, and by being upset, Trebizond proves he is not a good man. Poggio even ascribes to Trebizond the same motive Trebizond ascribed to Guarino, anger. According to Trebizond, the criticisms in the *RLV* had so angered Guarino that he lashed out in the Agaso letter. According to Poggio, Trebizond was so upset about the comments to Cauchus—comments for which Poggio insists he had apologized both verbally and in writing—that he fabricated the assassination plot.¹³³ Poggio chastises Trebizond’s inability to forgive and argues that if Trebizond cannot admit he is capable of making mistakes, then “by the judgment of all you claim too much for yourself.” The charge of imprudent behavior, he explains, is sometimes leveled against even the wisest men [*sapientissimi viri*].¹³⁴ Poggio implies

Nunquam aliquid de te cogitavi, quod non solum tibi, quamvis iniquus sis iudex, sed cuiquam bono viro debeat displicere: tu an idem feceris, tuae litterae satis impudenter scriptae testantur.

¹³³ Poggio’s claim that he had apologized for the Cauchus comments is a reference to the letter he composed in 1450. *Poggii Epistolae*, 3:21-24. Poggio thanked Trebizond for his aid with the Xenophon and Diodorus translations and assured him that he had intended no insult or dishonor in commenting on the Guarino feud. He still maintained that Trebizond’s treatment of Guarino had been inappropriate. For Poggio’s 1450 apology, see Chapter Three, pages 109-111.

¹³⁴ This section continues the passage in note 132. *Poggii Epistolae*, 3:49-50. Arguis me ob rem antiquam, quod olim scripserim in quadam epistola, te nominans, parum bene consulti hominis videri; idque in tuam contumeliam scriptum putas. Quam rem alias et verbis, et per epistolam apud te purgavi; scribens multa in tuam laudem, quae rectius tacuissem, credebam tibi ex mea defensione abunde satisfactum. Sed animus tuus, ut video, exulceratus, quoniam alia desunt, ex inanire iurgandi causam quaerens, conceptum contra me odium nequivit continere, ne dum in Trapezuntio, sed ne in Catone quidem fuissent ea verba contumeliosa. Si tantum in te consilii esse putas, ut errare nequeas, nimis tibi omnium iudicio arrogas; si errare te posse fateris, non mireris id de te dictum, quod sapientissimis quoque viris aliquando videmus objici, cum dicantur ea egisse, quae non bene consulti hominis esse videantur.

here that wise men accept their mistakes. Since Trebizond has not done so, he is neither wise nor truly a man. Poggio does not characterize Trebizond in childish or beast-like terms, but his arguments suggest a distinction between the actions of good men and those of Trebizond. Compared to the Cauchus letter and alongside Poggio's protests that he had hitherto always esteemed Trebizond, Poggio's February letter strongly suggests that Trebizond's less-than-manly actions had damaged his masculine status. He had lost his manhood.

The connection between conduct and manhood meant not only that masculinity could be lost but also that it could be regained, and humanists employed this facet of their concept of masculinity to their advantage as well. Immoderate behavior was frequently described as a leaving or losing of one's senses—as a result of furor, madness, *perturbationes animi*—and characterized as evidence of failed masculinity. On the other hand, regaining one's senses—exercising reason and acting reasonably—could restore manhood. The idea that one's masculine status could be regained served multiple purposes. First, it allowed an author to criticize his opponent as lacking reason and thus manhood. An individual had to lose his masculine status before it could be regained, after all. Secondly, that initial criticism allowed an author to express his superiority—by virtue of his reason and masculinity—over his opponent. Thirdly, the notion that masculinity could be regained allowed an author to present himself as a means of restoring an opponent's senses and manhood. The regaining of masculinity is one of the clearest examples in these letters that humanists conceptualized masculinity as a hierarchy. Not only did they relegate their opponents to lower positions in this hierarchy, but they offered hope that they, higher in the hierarchy, could help their foes become true men.

Trebizond argues that he can help both Guarino and Poggio regain their respective masculine statuses. During the feud with Guarino, he writes to Leonello that Guarino suffered an “excessive perturbation of the soul because we critiqued the style of his oration,” and was “agitated against me more than a learned man is permitted.”¹³⁵ In other words, Guarino had lost his senses. Trebizond proceeds to ask Leonello to arrange a public contest to demonstrate to everyone, especially Guarino, that Trebizond was the more learned of the two. The contest would also help return Guarino to his senses. It would convince him to abandon his anger and dishonorable attacks—hiding behind the Agaso pseudonym, for instance—in favor of an open competition befitting learned men:

...it was always most pleasing to those who labor at the good arts to write, to read, and to handle competitions and conflicts of this kind not with hatred, but with love, not with anger, but with affection, not with any spite, but with benevolence... For this reason learned men declaim; poets debate against one another; dialecticians, philosophers, doctors pass their days in disputation; and all of these men try to prove themselves more learned than others... not by abuse, nor by fraud, nor by deceit...¹³⁶

Trebizond maintains that public disputation is the proper field of battle for scholars. It is a perversion of *mores*, obstinacy and insolence, he explains, that leads some to fight with swords, spears, and torches instead.¹³⁷ It was Guarino’s anger about *RLV*’s criticisms that

¹³⁵ See pages 194-195.

¹³⁶ *Collectanea*, 379. (7) Nam omnibus qui bonis artibus insudarunt iocundissimum semper fuit contentiones huiusmodi ac concertationes non odio, sed amore, non ira, sed caritate, non livore aliquo, sed benivolentia scribere, legere, pertractare. Nec enim eos fugiebat quantum ea re sua studia excitarent. Hac de causa disertis declamabant; poete versus suos conferebant; dialectici, philosophi, medici dies suos in disputatione transigebant; cunctique re ipsa nullo convicio, nullo dolo, nulla fallacia doctiores se ceteris prestare conabantur adeo ut non nulli vel cum periculo in huiusmodi certamen descendere non dubitarent.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, 379-380. (9) Itaque ut clarius omnes sopitam iam multis seculis eloquentiam tua diligentia excitatam intelligant, si ad regiam gloriam accedere tibi videtur non gladiis, non telis, non facibus pugnare, sed oratione disceptare, si multis etatibus omissum pravitate morum et ignorantia declamandi usum, ut debes, revocare cupis, me tibi dedo. Paratus adero quandocumque iusseris. Hortare Guarinum ad hoc tam preclarum munus subeundum, quod apud maiores tanti fuit ut etiam seniores iam et defuncti non nunquam honoribus oratores domi ad excitandum ingenium declamarent. Atque utinam tua magnificentia extinctam

turned him to insults instead of disputing Trebizond honestly and openly.¹³⁸ At the same time, Trebizond notes that unlike his opponent he was not affected by any *perturbationes* but instead responded to Guarino to defend the value of the *RLV* and to protect both Greece and Vittorino from the slander of the Agaso letter.¹³⁹ Trebizond's cover letter to Leonello is an appeal for aid in returning Guarino to his senses. It enlists Leonello to help him lead Guarino from his path of irrational action to the behavior of learned, honest men. In that way, it is a call to restore Guarino to manhood.

Trebizond's suggestion to Leonello that they could restore Guarino's senses and the implication that they could restore his manhood bear the hallmarks of Quattrocento humanist education.¹⁴⁰ His arguments are even more meaningful viewed through the lens of humanist pedagogy which argued that learned, virtuous men could lead youths to rational and moderate behavior, and thus to manhood. The notion that masculinity can be regained offers him further means of denigrating Guarino. He does so by using the methods of inculcating virtue—praise, blame, the modeling of appropriate behavior—that humanist educators such as Vergerio and Piccolomini advocated. His censures of

eloquentiam suscitasse mores hominum, qui huic rei impedimento sunt, correxisse per Guarinum atque Georgium in posterum predicetur! Crede mihi, princeps illustris, nemo est qui non regiam hanc et te dignam laudem existimet. Quam ut facilius per Guarinum et Georgium consequi possis ceterique imitari rectius queant, omittamus convicia que hanc rem tam utilem funditus evertunt. Contumacia enim hominum ac insolentia effecit magis quam ignorantia ut rem agendam contemnant et ad iniuriandum rapiantur.

¹³⁸ Ibid., 380. (10) Cur ergo rem suam non agit? Cur de generibus dicendi non disserit? Cur scribendo non efficit ut posse videatur, quod eum posse negavimus? Ad convicia conversus est, qui mos declamandi usum destruxit.

¹³⁹ Ibid., 379. (6) Nam que modo ei respondimus, non odio aut ira aut quavis alia perturbatione affecti respondimus, sed partim propter utilitatem communem, nequis Rhetoricorum nostrorum libros, quos posteritati et humanitatis studiis consulentes edidimus, verbis eius deceptus negligat; partim pietate, tum in patrem, tum in patriam, quoniam et Greciam vituperare et a Victorino in se nos traducere callidus homo ausus est.

¹⁴⁰ I discuss the humanist educational model in the introduction, pages 162-164, including the belief that instructors could lead their charges into manhood by inculcating virtue. The instructor-student paradigm also played an important role in arguments about learning and knowledge. See pages 181-185.

Guarino's *perturbationes animi* and so-called childish behavior are an example of wielding blame to improve conduct. Trebizond also casts himself as a model of virtuous behavior. His appeals to Leonello to help him coerce Guarino into a public declamation, the appropriate means of conflict resolution for scholars, can be viewed as attempts to present himself as a positive role model for Guarino. He was suggesting that with Leonello's help he could correct Guarino's behavior and teach him to act like a man. Trebizond was striking the pose of an instructor guiding a student's behavior. It is doubtful that his attempts were sincere, but the educational model and the contingency of masculinity provided convenient means to attack Guarino's honor.

Trebizond articulates a similar desire to return Poggio to his senses and help him regain his manhood during their feud. His March 1453 letter to Poggio illustrates this well. The letter responds to Poggio's accusation of the previous month that Trebizond fabricated the assassination plot and wrote to Nicholas V about it to tarnish Poggio's reputation.¹⁴¹ Trebizond denies this and argues that he wrote to Nicholas partly out of self-defense and partly out of concern for Poggio himself. Here he cites Poggio's "childish affair" with Lorenzo Valla, whose life Poggio had threatened.¹⁴² Although Trebizond argues that he had counseled Poggio to exercise restraint, he adds that it was only Nicholas's intervention that had stopped Poggio from violence. Poggio's anger toward Valla, Trebizond explains, had compelled him to write to Nicholas about the assassination plot: "I brought this complaint to the pope to free your mind from plots and free myself from danger." When he received Poggio's February letter, he explains, he

¹⁴¹ *Poggii Epistolae*, 3:50-51. Non intelligebam, neque enim expresseras in litteris ad me tuis, quae causa te ad me lacerandum impulisset... Nam quid opus fuit, nisi ad malivolentiam et infamiam adversus me excitandam, falsam et ridiculam querelam ad Pontificem deferri?

¹⁴² See page 191.

knew “that you had been commanded by the pope to completely cast aside from your mind thoughts of this kind [violence]... that he had turned you to writing.”¹⁴³ Trebizond uses the Valla affair to cast Poggio as childish and himself as rational and manly. The story bears another suggestion as well, though. First during the Valla affair and then during their own conflict, Trebizond claims he had tried to guide Poggio to proper behavior, in effect to return him to his senses. The implication is that Poggio’s behavior *could* be corrected, he *could* regain his senses, and his actions would cease to be childish. Trebizond situates all three men in a hierarchy. Poggio is the child whose *perturbationes animi* compel his actions, and Trebizond and Nicholas are the men who can “free his mind from plots” and teach him how to act like a man.

Trebizond’s account of the Poggio-Valla feud also offers another indication of the humanist anxiety regarding masculinity. As Trebizond tells it, once Poggio had abandoned his plans for violence and written to Valla—as Trebizond had counseled—Trebizond praised him for changing his mind. Poggio, again according to Trebizond, “replied with indignation... ‘Why do you think to admonish me as if I were a child?’” Poggio may not have actually said this, of course. It may simply be Trebizond’s rhetorical attempt to make his opponent seem foolish and childish, since he frames the response as an overreaction. That humanists could resent insinuations of childishness is certainly plausible, however, as this chapter has shown. At the same time, there are

¹⁴³ Walser, 512-513. Alia de causa detuli nisi ut iussu eius respiscas. An credis forsan immemorem me esse adeo ut non meminerim quando in re puerili vere in multis a Valla fuisses reprensus: ita te exarsisse ut vitam eius extinguere constitueris? Particeps ego tum ut amicus eram consiliorum tuorum et hortabar, ut nihil curares, quoniam magnitudo animi in negligendo non in ulciscendo perspicitur, vel si ulcisci velles scriptis id ageres. Equum esset si scriptis lesit ut scriptis ledatur; ferro cum illo esse agendum non calamo exclamabas. Deinde cum ad scribendum versus esses, laudabam te quod consilium mutasses. ‘Quid tu ita me credis quasi puerum moneri,’ cum indignatione respondisti. Iste papa, ex quo vita mea pendet, mihi iussit nequaquam tale facere audeam. Hac ergo de causa querelam ad pontificem detuli, ut et tuum ab insidiis animum et me a periculo liberarem.

numerous indications that appropriate scholarly behavior required accepting fair criticism from one's peers. Trebizond held this standard against Guarino when defending the criticisms in the *RLV* in March 1437. Likewise, Poggio offered Trebizond's assassination plot allegation as evidence that he was unjustly angered about the Cauchus comments. Here Trebizond describes his advice as good counsel and evidence that he had tried to lead Poggio to the path of good conduct. In that context, Poggio's alleged anger at Trebizond's so-called admonishment stands as further evidence of his unmanly behavior. The comment leaves a strong impression at the end of Trebizond's story. Even after Nicholas's intervention, when Poggio had in theory returned to his senses, he was still childishly defensive toward Trebizond's praise. That impression fits well in Trebizond's argument that he feared Poggio's irrational behavior because of the prior feud with Valla.

The Agaso and Poggio letters add further evidence of how humanists understood the loss and restoration of masculinity. Their arguments against Trebizond are substantively similar to, but also stylistically different from, his. They tend to lack explicit references to masculinity—Agaso is more explicit than Poggio, but less than Trebizond—but still rely upon the same attendant concepts. Agaso, for instance, repeatedly casts himself and Guarino's patrician students in the role of rational, moderate men in contrast to Trebizond, the arrogant, shameless Greekling.¹⁴⁴ The contrast criticizes Trebizond's failed masculinity and insinuates that he had lost all or part of his masculine status. Like Trebizond's account of the Poggio-Valla feud, at times Agaso offers advice to Trebizond to recant his lies, apologize for them, and retract what he had written in a short letter. He notes that it is never too late to choose the path to good *mores*. The advice is Agaso's attempt to improve Trebizond's behavior, which he

¹⁴⁴ See for instance the discussion of Trebizond "slandering" Guarino, pages 192-193.

elsewhere characterizes as typical of arrogant Greeklings, children, and beasts.¹⁴⁵ This is his effort to cast himself, as Trebizond does, as an aid to restoring another's senses, and helping another regain his manhood. Agaso frequently admonishes Trebizond's bad behavior, but his admonitions are framed by an expressed interest—genuine or not—in improving his conduct. To that end, Agaso discusses “repairing [Trebizond's] *mores*,” and leading him to the proper gratitude he owes to Guarino. That change, Agaso adds, would gain him glory and praise.¹⁴⁶ Agaso's letter, like Trebizond's, thus incorporates the instructor-student paradigm into arguments about masculine conduct. This is the case as well when Agaso exhorts his reader to “encourage Guarino...to put down this Trebizond's obstinacy and chasten the student with an instructor's authority.”¹⁴⁷ As severe as Agaso's assessment of Trebizond is, it includes a sense that Trebizond's childish and beast-like behaviors can be overcome and, by extension, that he can regain his manhood through proper conduct.

Poggio too appropriates the role of humanist educator and claims to teach his opponent modesty, prudence, and the markers of manly restraint. His chosen method of instruction is to offer his own behavior as worthy of imitation. This is not to say that he

¹⁴⁵ See note 108.

¹⁴⁶ *Collectanea*, 371. (33) “Homine enim imperito et inepto nunquam quicquam iniustius est, qui nisi quod ipse fecit nil rectum putat. Quod si tanta Trapezuntium cura sollicitat ut inepta coaptare, turbata disponere, male posita struere conetur, queso ut discordem totamque sub arma coactam componat Italiam. Que si maiora viribus abnuat, hominem rogate, viri patricii, ut portus vestri latiore reddat alveum et ituris rediturisque navibus utiliora concinnet hostia. Quod si rursum maius humeris opus respuet, suos concinnet mores et obliquam linguam dirrigat et ingratum sese preceptoris discipulum gratum observantemque formet ac reficiat, que sibi decus laudemque parient.”

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 372. (38) Habes peregrinationis mee redditam tibi rationem, non autem repertorium, ut confidebas et ego sperabam, librorum. Non desinam tamen interea tabernas quasque librarias odorari ut et tue faciam satis cupiditati et mee pro tuis mandatis diligentie testimonium reddam. Tu vero Guarinum pro tua in eum fide et consuetudine hortare, immo urge, incende, anima ut huius Trapezuntii contumaciam confutet et discipulum preceptoris auctoritate castiget ne pro innata sibi modestia, qua velut asinos solet conviciatores parvi facere, tam honoris et fame negligens, huic ipsi Greculo maledicentiam, temeritatem, contumaciam sinat increscere quod studiorum non mediocre dedecus avertendum est.

does not explicitly criticize his opponent, because he does. He is far less likely, though, to call Trebizond childish or beast-like, and his arguments seem more moderate as a result. They are, however, no less an effort to challenge Trebizond's masculinity and to suggest that Poggio can guide him to a state of true manhood. His modeling tactic is first evident when in 1437 he laments Trebizond's contempt of Guarino and argues that the better path is the one he followed in his own dispute with Guarino: offend your opponent as little as possible and respond more moderately than the one who offended you. After all, he explains, our cases are rendered less commendable when made with insults and abuse.¹⁴⁸ Poggio is more explicit in response to the assassination plot. Having rejected the plot as absurd, he claims that he follows the ancients in believing that offenses ought to be forgiven rather than avenged. He argues that if Trebizond had simply imitated his own moderate behavior, he would have saved them both from having to deal with the annoyance of the assassination charge.¹⁴⁹ In both examples, Poggio offers his own

¹⁴⁸ *Poggii Epistolae*, 2:127-128. Quod autem is me suis verbis honorat, esset mihi gratius, si non vergeret in contemptum Guarini, cujus honori a me semper consultum fuit, et praesertim in nostra controversia, qua ei respondi, cum is me paulum laccessisset, quod Scipionem suo praetulerim Caesari. Egi tamen ita meam defensionem, ut eum minime offenderem, nisi ubi causa id necessario postularet. Hoc certe recte videor posse dicere, me parcius quam acceperim, nonnulla retulisse. Ubi enim ratione pugnandum est et argumentis, sunt omnino rejiciendae voces contumeliis et jurgiis refertae, quae et auditoribus sunt ingratae, et causam nostram minime reddunt probabiliorem. See also pages 204-206.

¹⁴⁹ This is part of Poggio's argument that he had heard a rumor that Trebizond had both requested and procured from Alfonso of Aragon Poggio's property in Naples. See Chapter Three, pages 128-129. Poggio contends that even in light of the rumor he exercised restraint in his treatment of Trebizond. *Poggii Epistolae*, 3:51-52. An vero ita me stultum putas, ita imprudentem, ut nescio quibus vanis hominibus, qui te inani ostentione terrerent, meam famam et existimationem, ut de animae salute omittam, committere voluisse? Absit a me talis cogitatio, nedum opus. Est moris mei, tum reliquis in rebus, tum in hoc sequi praecepta sapientum, quae jubent oblivione potius, injurias esse, quam manu aut viribus ulciscendas. Persuade tibi quod libet: futurum tempus te ostendet male sensisse, et incertam suspicionem pro certo maleficio accepisse. Tuum est credere ut voles; ego mea conscientia contentus ero: si tamen modestiam a me praestitam, in qua me laudo, fuisses imitatus, et te, et me inani labore et molestia liberasses. Nam cum ad me, dum essem nuper Florentiae, a pluribus scriptum esset, te possessiones meas a rege inclito Aragonum dono postulasse, atque impetrasse, non sum tecum eam injuriam questus, neque quicquam ad te scripsi contumeliosum, existimans famam, quae ferebatur, non esse veram, et id factum a prudentia tanti principis alienum.

behavior as worthy of imitation, a posture he adopts throughout the letter. His protest at the outset that he will “reply in a few words, and somewhat more moderately than you” is an implicit invitation for Trebizond to moderate his speech and act with dignity.¹⁵⁰ The letter as a whole can be taken as Poggio’s attempt to act out the ideal he voiced in the letter to Cauchus, that one should return less to one’s opponent than one first received. Given that dictum, it is unsurprising that Poggio casts his response as reasoned and moderate. Beyond that, Poggio’s tone suggests that he, like Trebizond and Agaso, wants to present himself as a guide to virtuous behavior and thus to true manhood.

The second half of this analysis has examined how humanists incorporated imagery depicting failed masculinity into attacks against an opponent’s conduct. Trebizond, Agaso, and Poggio each linked concepts of restraint and moral rectitude to manhood, and by contrast, a lack of restraint and immoral behaviors to failed masculinity. They expressed the latter through references to children, women, beasts, and monsters, each of which was conceived in opposition to men whose actions were reasoned and moderate. These authors also understood manhood to be fluid rather than a static state, a view that made possible creative uses of the instructor-student paradigm as a vehicle for insults. At the same time, their letters also reveal an anxiety about being cast as a failed man, for instance as a child whose behavior needed correction.

Trebizond later denies Poggio’s tale, arguing that the lie was another of Poggio’s plots against him. Walser, 513-514. *Deinde paulo post te laudas, quod mecum non fueris questus, cum tibi nuper Florentie moram trahenti complures amici scripsissent, me possessiones tuas a rege inclyto dono postulasse atque impetrasse... Nam cur saltem non explorasti si quicquam hic tale dictum est, nec veritus es dicere ab inclyto rege, me postulasse; an pertimisti pondus testimonii eius? immo nec cogitasti quidem. Cur quia cupiditas perpetrandi facinoris te exagitat quia exarsisti iussus non facere. Quid quod fateri videris ad terrendum me insidias te struxisse?*

¹⁵⁰ *Poggii Epistolae*, 3:49. *Recepi tuas litteras, ultraquam mores tuos et doctrinam deceat, contumeliosas nimium ac petulantes: ignosco naturae tuae et animi perturbationi, in qua ex tuis verbis intelligo te versari. Sed ne videar tacendo, vel assentiri, vel contemnere quae scribis, et ut me purgem in eo, quo me inique et falso accusas, respondebo paucis, et paulo modestius quam tu, ne in quo es reprehendendus te videar imitari.*

Conclusion

An examination of Trebizond's feuds with Guarino and Poggio reveals the rich, varied language and categories related to masculinity that these figures had at their disposal. Their letters indicate how they understood manhood and folded a language of masculinity into their contests. They used categories of masculinity in oppositional ways to praise their own learning and conduct and to attack that of their opponent. In doing so, they challenged the masculine status of their opponents. These challenges—depending on the author and the argument at stake—could range from mild censures of individual instances of inappropriate—childish or beast-like—behavior, to stronger accusations that essentially verbally emasculated an opponent, annihilating or effacing his masculine identity and replacing it with something else. Agaso used his concept of manhood to amplify his depiction of Trebizond as a Cretan beast and as an ungrateful student by casting his treatment of Guarino as childish. Trebizond used accusations of failed masculinity to criticize Guarino's rhetorical style as childish and unlearned, and to describe Poggio as having an emotional, violent, and childish nature. Lastly, this chapter has argued that the humanist language of masculinity presumed a hierarchy that distinguished the true man from the failed man. The man was defined by his use of reason, measured both by his learnedness and by the rational control of his emotions. Beneath him were the various iterations of the failed man—the child, the woman, the beast. In some ways, these categories stood on equal footing. They were all defined primarily by their contrast with true manhood. In certain cases, though, humanists made distinctions between them. Those who violated cultural norms more frequently were seen as less manly and more childish, beast-like, or womanish than those who erred less often,

acknowledged their mistakes, and repented. Given this hierarchy, the concept of masculinity allowed an author to proclaim his superiority over another by virtue of his reason. In the end, masculinity represents another example of the verbal strategies available to humanists to self-present and contest honor.

The previous three chapters have given ample attention to Trebizond's feuds with Guarino and Poggio and assessed their shared verbal strategies, acts of self-presentation, and modes of expression. The next and final chapter expands the examination of humanist contests to consider the larger community of scholars of which Trebizond was a part. My analysis shifts from a study of Trebizond to one of Guarino, Poggio, and their feuds with other scholars. In considering two new feuds, the focus of the investigation will be not on the themes that each author relied upon, although those will be discussed, but on the vehicle for their acts of self-presentation: invective as a literary genre.

CHAPTER FIVE

HUMANIST INVECTIVE AND SELF-PRESENTATION

Introduction

Quattrocento humanists contested honor through written acts of self-presentation that allowed them to fashion desirable identities for the purpose of professional advancement and individual glory. George of Trebizond's feuds with Guarino of Verona and Poggio Bracciolini demonstrate how acts of self-presentation had concrete consequences for scholars and how humanists used a variety of shared categories and a common language of honor—involving concepts of restraint and manhood, for example—in their disputes. The preceding chapters have examined this language of honor both to assess how and why humanists engaged in disputes as they did and to develop a richer and more accurate understanding of humanist social practices. The letters of Trebizond and his opponents, however, are also examples of invective, a literary genre that was often the favorite vehicle for humanist self-presentation. The present chapter illustrates how Trebizond's experiences with self-presentation and invective were typical of Quattrocento humanism. To discuss such typicality and humanist culture more generally, the chapter will step back from a deep reading of Trebizond's feuds to consider two other examples of how invective functioned as a tool for the rhetorical presentation of self. The first involves Guarino's invective against Niccolò Niccoli in Florence in 1413, and the second Poggio's first of four invectives written against Lorenzo Valla between 1452 and 1453 in Rome. These contests are of value to a study of Trebizond

because they show his opponents engaging in similar means of self-presentation and expressing the same kind of anxiety regarding audience, reputation, and honor as he did.

The analysis here argues three main points. The first is that invective was one of the primary modes of expression available to humanists for the rhetorical presentation of self and that scholars understood invective to have discernible limits. The second is that the guidelines for humanist invective were indebted to the classical Latin oratorical tradition and then adapted to contemporary contests of honor. The third is that an understanding of humanist invective as a literary genre with classical antecedents demonstrates a clear need to reevaluate how existing scholarship regards fifteenth-century invective and those who wrote it.

The Latin rhetorical tradition had developed clear guidelines for verbal and literary abuse. Classical theorists situated invective in demonstrative oratory as a part of the rhetoric of praise [*laus*] and blame [*vituperatio*] and used it to argue court cases. The purpose, “rather than supplying logical proofs,” was to add “*pathos* [emotion] to *logos* [reason] and turn the audience against the orator’s opponent and toward his own cause.”¹

¹ Valentina Arena, “Roman Oratorical Invective,” in *A Companion to Roman Rhetoric*, ed. William J. Dominik and Jon Hall (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2007), 149-151. The scholarship on classical invective is substantial. The same cannot be said for the scholarship on Renaissance invective, the limitations of which I discuss below, pages 225-230. For useful monographs addressing classical invective see Amy Richlin, *The Garden of Priapus: Sexuality and Aggression in Roman Humor* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 96-104; Anthony Corbeill, *Controlling Laughter: Political Humor in the Late Roman Republic* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996); Brian A. Krostenko, *Cicero, Catullus, and the Language of Social Performance* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001); Catherine Steel, *Roman Oratory, Greece and Rome. New Surveys in the Classics 36* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press for the Classical Association, 2006). For useful articles, see Corbeill, “Ciceronian Invective,” in *Brill’s Companion to Cicero: Oratory and Rhetoric*, ed. James M. May (Boston: Brill, 2002), 197-217 and Corbeill, “Rhetorical Education and Social Reproduction in the Republic and Early Empire,” in *A Companion to Roman Rhetoric*, ed. Dominik and Hall, 69-82; C.P. Craig, “Audience Expectations, Invective, and Proof,” in *Cicero the Advocate*, ed. J.G.F. Powell and Jeremy Paterson (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004): 187-213 and Craig, “Self-Restraint, Invective, and Credibility in Cicero’s ‘First Catilinarian Oration,’” *The American Journal of Philology* 128, no.3 (Autumn, 2007): 335-339. See also Anna A. Novokhatko, *The Invectives of Sallust and Cicero: Critical Edition with Introduction, Translation, and Commentary* (New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2009). Novokhatko’s first three chapters discuss the invectives, their context, and their manuscript tradition.

As Antonius remarks in Cicero's *De oratore*, "nothing in oratory...is more important than to win for the orator the favour of his hearer, and to have the latter so affected as to be swayed by something resembling a mental impulse or emotion, rather than by judgment or deliberation."² Orators accomplished this by *ad hominem* attacks and used ethical preconceptions to accuse opponents of unacceptable behavior.³ The strategies they used were laid out in Cicero's *De inventione* and the *Rhetorica ad Herennium*. "Praise and censure," the *De inventione* explains, "will be derived from the topics that are employed with respect to the attributes of persons...these may be divided into mind [*animus*], body [*corpus*] and external circumstances [*res externa*]." The *Ad Herennium* expands on this division and details the kinds of considerations the orator must make. The orator must "consider his [opponent's] virtues and defects of character... [and ask] 'Has he been rich or poor? What kinds of power has he wielded? ...With what loyalty, goodwill, and sense of duty has he conducted his friendships?'"⁴ Personal attacks were

² Cic., *De or.* 2.178. This and subsequent translations are Sutton's. Cicero, *De oratore*, trans. E.W. Sutton (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1959). Antonius goes on to explain how an orator can "excite in the minds of the...audience...love, hate, wrath, jealousy, compassion, hope, joy, fear or vexation..." Cic., *De or.* 2.205-211. See also the discussion of the very important role that humor played in winning favor for an orator. Cic., *De or.* 2.236. I provide a more specific sketch of the classical consideration of the rules and limits of humor below, pages 267-268.

³ Corbeill, *Controlling Laughter*, 17-20; Novokhatko, 12-15.

⁴ I discuss these categories in greater detail below, pages 248-249. See Cic., *Inv. rhet.* 1.34-36 and 2.177-178; *Rhet. Her.* 3.10-15. The translations from *De inventione*, unless otherwise noted, are Hubbell's. Cicero, *De inventione*, trans. H.M. Hubbell (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1949). The translations from the *Rhetorica ad Herennium* are Caplan's. *Rhetorica ad Herennium*, ed. Harry Caplan (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1964). For the rhetoric of praise and blame in Quintilian see Quint., *Inst.* 3.7, especially sections 19-22. On the important place of the *De inventione* and *Rhetorica ad Herennium*—the latter commonly attributed to Cicero in the fifteenth century—in early modern education see Paul Grendler, *Schooling in Renaissance Italy: Literacy and Learning, 1300-1600* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989), 212-213. For an overview of their role in Quattrocento invective see Ennio I. Rao, *Curmudgeons in High Dudgeon: 101 Years of Invectives (1352-1453)* (Messina: EDAS, 2007), 13. Martin Davies explains that humanists also relied on the *De oratore*, Cicero's speeches—particularly *In Pisonem*—and the exchanges with Sallust attributed to Cicero. M.C. Davies, "An Emperor without Clothes? Niccolò Niccoli under Attack," in *Maistor: Classical, Byzantine, and Renaissance Studies for Robert Browning* (Canberra: Australian Association for Byzantine Studies, 1984), 274.

crucial since “there can be little foundation for a motive for a crime unless such suspicion is cast on the character of the accused that it will seem not to be inconsistent with such a fault...Therefore the prosecutor ought to discredit the life of the accused.” If unable to demonstrate that the accused has the character to perpetrate a particular crime, Cicero suggests the orator should “show that other vices are not foreign to his nature, and that it is no wonder if one who in that other affair acted basely, passionately and wantonly should have transgressed in this case also. For everything that detracts from the defendant’s honour and repute, lessens in so far his chance for a complete defense.”⁵

Roman forensic models appealed to humanists because reputation was critical to their careers. Humanists viewed their peers and patrons as Roman advocates viewed their juries, used *ad hominem* attacks, and engaged in the public acts of censuring and denigrating another based on societal ethical preconceptions to sway their audience. Their insults were carefully constructed arguments they assumed would be made public via an active third party who would read and spread them to new people and places. Invective was often composed as a letter to a friend, enemy, or interested third party, a medium that reflected the general humanist use of letter-writing as a means of self-presentation. By the early Quattrocento, letter-writing had become the main “means by which scholars...disseminated their ideas and made their case in scholarly controversy.”⁶

Petrarch was an early figure in this development. After the discovery of Cicero’s letters to Atticus and Quintus in 1345 he composed his own *Familiares*. Guarino taught Cicero’s

⁵ Cic., *Inv. rhet.* 2.32-33.

⁶ Surpassing the oration, according to Cecil H. Clough, “The Cult of Antiquity: Letters and Letter Collections,” in *Cultural Aspects of the Italian Renaissance: Essays in Honour of Paul Oskar Kristeller*, ed. Cecil H. Clough (New York: A.F. Zambelli, 1976), 33.

Epistolae ad familiares, discovered in 1345, in Verona in April 1419.⁷ Humanists also took an interest in the publication of their letters, a venture that “was beginning to serve as a sign that one was a serious scholar.” Leonardo Bruni edited his own letters, recalling them from his correspondents to do so, and arranged them into an eight book collection in 1440. Poggio arranged his own collection as well, as did Francesco Filelfo. Guarino did not, but approximately one thousand of his letters survive nonetheless, an indication of their value among his contemporaries.⁸ Each of these activities were typical of a period “when humanists labored to compose their letters in Ciceronian Latin; when these letters were transcribed for dispatch in humanistic script; when a letter writer himself edited his letters into a collection of the classical models.” Their letters were “written and dispatched by means of messengers” and composed “not only for their correspondents but with a view to the publication of some, at least, of their correspondence during their lifetime.” As a form of self-presentation the writing, collection, and publication of letters was aimed at “the preservation only of that which was meritorious” about an author.⁹

⁷ Ibid., 36; Elizabeth May McCahill, “Finding a Job as a Humanist: The Epistolary Collection of Lapo da Castiglionchio the Younger,” *Renaissance Quarterly* 57, no.4 (Winter 2004): 1309-1310. On the use of Cicero’s letters in the early modern classroom see Grendler, 222-229 and Robert Black, *Humanism and Education in Medieval and Renaissance Italy: Tradition and Innovation in Latin Schools from the Twelfth to the Fifteenth Century* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 352-355. On Guarino’s school see William H. Woodward, *Studies in Education during the Age of the Renaissance, 1400-1600* (New York: Russell & Russell, 1965), 40 and 42-43.

⁸ Letters, especially Bruni’s, were valued as models for students to follow in their studies. Clough, 37-39; McCahill, 1309; Davies, 287. The advent of printing aided the circulation of these collections. Clough reports that Filelfo’s self-edited letter collection appeared in print around 1472 in Venice, and was reprinted eighteen times before 1501. Bruni’s collection was reprinted five times during the same period, while Aeneas Silvius Piccolomini’s—the future Pope Pius II—collections were reprinted twenty times. Clough, 41-42. Guarino did not collect and edit his letters. Leonello d’Este, however, did pay to have some of Guarino’s letters bound in 1437. Ian Thomson, “Studies in the Life, Scholarship, and Educational Achievement of Guarino da Verona (1374-1460)” (PhD diss., University of St. Andrews, 1969), 301, <http://hdl.handle.net/10023/2965>.

⁹ Clough, 34-35. On the script Clough describes, invented by Poggio and Niccoli, see B.L. Ullman, *The Origins and Development of Humanistic Script* (Rome, 1960).

As a means to cultivating one's reputation, letter-writing was naturally suited to invective.¹⁰ Humanists exercised great care in crafting, revising, and disseminating their invectives and making sure they were public knowledge, as they did with all their letters. Petrarch, for example, adapted the letter model to the writing of invective and took the enterprise seriously. David Marsh comments that Petrarch "evidently viewed them [his invectives] as important, since he took the trouble to revise and publish them." Ennio Rao, author of an important recent overview of fifteenth-century invective, adds that Petrarch "showed towards the texts of his invectives the same care that he showed towards his other writings. His invectives were always considered an integral part of his literary output and were copied and bound with manuscripts of his works."¹¹ The figures examined in the present chapter also composed their invectives as letters. Guarino wrote against Niccoli first in a letter to Blasio Guasconi before revising his piece for a wider distribution. We have also seen multiple examples in the preceding examinations of Trebizond's feuds indicating the public nature of invectives, how they circulated hand-to-hand, among friends and patrons, and passed from city to city, and how they were commonly composed as letters. Trebizond issued his *Responsio* to Guarino in the spring of 1437, for example, and later that fall Poggio had not only received both the Agaso

¹⁰ On the value of printed letter collections to humanists, Clough comments "scholars are often known for their sharpness rather than for their humility and kindness...the second half of the fifteenth century witnessed excessive acrimony and vituperation...frustrated and bitter scholars criticized one another as rivals. Scholars were quick to appreciate the value of the press as a means of bringing their work and criticisms to notice." Clough, 46.

¹¹ David Marsh, introduction to *Francesco Petrarca: Invectives*, ed. and trans. David Marsh (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003), viii; Rao, *Curmudgeons*, 17. For Petrarch's care with his letter collections see the articles by Aldo S. Bernardo, "Letter-Splitting in Petrarch's *Familiars*," *Speculum* 33, no.2 (April 1958): 236-241 and "The Selection of Letters in Petrarch's *Familiars*," *Speculum* 35, no.2 (April 1960): 280-288. John M. Najemy includes a brief discussion of Petrarch's letters in his *Between Friends: Discourses of Power and Desire in the Machiavelli-Vettori Letters of 1513-1515* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993), 25-30. See also McCahill, 1309.

letter and Trebizond's response but had written to a friend about the dispute.¹² As a vehicle for self-presentation, invective was a crucial part of the construction of the humanist persona and flourished because it was a tool that could influence public perception. Moreover, the consequences of humanist insults were often far more prosaic than the often-mentioned pursuit of glory. Invective that successfully persuaded its audience could lose a person his job or force him to relocate, as in the case of Trebizond after his fight with Poggio in the curia.

To support the first two arguments, the chapter is structured around three *topoi* common to humanist invective that reflect the fifteenth-century debt to classical models. The goal is to examine how and why Guarino, Poggio, and ultimately Trebizond wrote as they did and to understand the rules associated with invective as its purveyors understood them. The idea that invective has rules at all may at first seem difficult to believe given how aggressive and insulting the texts themselves often are. Reading past that aggression explains how humanists articulated a sense of when and how it was appropriate to attack another. The first trope examined is the concept of provocation. Humanist invective is littered with claims that an author had been provoked into defending himself. The second trope involves the use of a set of standard categories—divided according to classical

¹² On invectives as letters see Rao, *Curmudgeons*, 24. When Trebizond wrote to Guarino in response to Andreas Agaso's letter, he sent a copy with a cover letter to Leonello d'Este. His invective against Guarino was also a letter. As Monfasani notes, the manuscripts of the Agaso letter and Trebizond's response were frequently bound together, providing an indication on how they were circulated and read. *Collectanea Trapezuntiana: Texts, Documents, and Bibliographies of George of Trebizond*, ed. Monfasani (Binghamton, NY: Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies, 1984), 364. See also Chapter Two, note 2. Likewise, Trebizond and Poggio exchanged letters with one another. As to the public nature of humanist disputes, when Trebizond wrote in March 1453 to Poggio, he criticized Poggio's behavior towards Lorenzo Valla, indicating his knowledge of the very public Poggio-Valla dispute. On the Poggio-Valla dispute and on its status as a *cause célèbre* in and beyond Rome, see Chapter Three, pages 135-136. The Scipio-Caesar controversy between Poggio and Guarino in 1435 was another public dispute carried out and later discussed via letter. For Trebizond's criticism of Guarino treatment of Poggio during that conflict, see Chapter Four, pages 172-173. Poggio used the Scipio-Caesar conflict as an example of his moderation when commenting on the Trebizond-Guarino conflict in 1437. See Chapter Three, pages 108-109.

models into insults of *animus*, *corpus*, and *res externa*—from which humanists drew. Many of these pertained to an opponent’s moral behavior—including accusations of pretentiousness, arrogance, avarice, abuse of family and friends, and sexual misconduct—and learning.¹³ The third trope involves wit and mockery as forms of humor. The purpose in examining these *topoi* is not to reduce invective to a list of mechanical tropes or humanist contests to mere formal rhetorical exercises. These tropes were crucial to wielding invective successfully and negotiating honor.

The third argument of the present chapter, underlying the examination of the *topoi* just outlined, is that it is necessary to reconsider how fifteenth-century invective and its authors are characterized in existing accounts of humanist conflicts. I argue there is an analytical problem in Renaissance studies, a tendency towards moralizing and condemnatory views of humanist invective that has created distorted and sometimes undeservedly negative portraits of individual humanist scholars. This tendency is evident in classic nineteenth-century works that struggled to reconcile the idea of erudite humanist scholars writing scurrilous, vitriolic compositions. William Shepherd, whose *Life of Poggio Bracciolini* (1802) is still the major English language biography of the humanist, viewed invective and its practitioners in a decidedly negative manner. He characterized the invectives exchanged between Poggio and Francesco Filelfo in the 1430s as “exhausting every topic of obloquy,” an “odious mass of...allegations,”

¹³ The use of these categories by classical writers has been amply studied, as in the works listed in note 1. Renaissance studies rarely explore them in a detailed manner, as in Davies, 272; Marsh, xi-xvi. Diana Robin addresses some of these categories in her consideration of sexual misconduct and avarice in the invectives against Francesco Filelfo. See her “A Reassessment of the Character of Francesco Filelfo (1398-1481),” *Renaissance Quarterly* 36, no.2 (Summer 1983): 204-214. The most substantial treatments of these categories in humanist invective are in Rao, *Curmudgeons*, 99-120 and David Rutherford, introduction to *Early Renaissance Invective and The Controversies of Antonio da Rho* (Tempe: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies, 2005), 1-40. Rutherford’s introduction is particularly useful but his analysis of the tropes he identifies in the texts he examines is limited.

“virulent and foul abuse,” and as acrimony that “defeated its own purpose.”¹⁴ Shepherd expressed disappointment at Poggio’s participation in such exchanges: “[Poggio] unfortunately indulged, to the latest period of his life, that bitterness of resentment, and that intemperance of language, which disgraced his strictures on Francesco Filelfo.”¹⁵

John Addington Symonds also lamented the Poggio-Filelfo invectives in his *Renaissance in Italy* (1897):

Raking that literary dunghill, it is now impossible to distinguish the true from the false; all proportion is lost in the mass of overcharged and indiscriminate scurrility. That such encounters should have been enjoyed and applauded by polite society is one of the strangest signs of the times; and that the duelists themselves should have imagined they were treading in the steps of Cicero and Demosthenes is even more astounding.¹⁶

He made similar remarks about the later Poggio-Valla dispute, describing it as a “disgraceful fray” and Poggio’s orations as “disgusting compositions.” He added that “there is no sort of vituperation which the antagonists do not vomit forth against each other, no obscenity and roguery of which they are not mutually accused.”¹⁷

Surprisingly, some modern studies continue to draw moralistic conclusions as they too seek to make sense of the aggressive and sometimes savage tone of humanist invective.¹⁸ Marsh speaks to this trend, writing, “the violent language of [Petrarch’s]

¹⁴ William Shepherd, *The Life of Poggio Bracciolini*, 2nd ed. (Liverpool: Harris, 1837), 252.

¹⁵ Ibid., 439. On Shepherd’s disappointment with humanist invective and polemicists see David Rundle, “*Un amico del Roscoe*: William Shepherd and the First Modern *Life of Poggio Bracciolini* (1802),” in *Roscoe and Italy: The Reception of Italian Renaissance History and Culture in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries*, ed. Stella Fletcher (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2012), 192-193.

¹⁶ John Addington Symonds, *Renaissance in Italy*, vol. 2, *The Revival of Learning* (London: Smith, Elder, 1897), 173-174.

¹⁷ Ibid., 174-175.

¹⁸ I do not mean to suggest that modern authors read nineteenth-century accounts such as Shepherd’s and Symond’s uncritically. Even so, both works were important in their own right and are cited in modern

invectives will shock readers who are more familiar with Petrarca as the sweet celebrant of his love for Laura.” Marsh’s remark indicates that even today some readers are “shocked” by the violent language of invective.¹⁹ Rao’s *Curmudgeons in High Dudgeon* (2007) is indicative of this and frequently condemnatory of humanist polemicists.²⁰ In labeling the subjects of his study “curmudgeons,” Rao provides a glimpse into his views about humanist polemicists. One of his key arguments is that invective became increasingly severe as the Quattrocento progressed, a development he attributes to the characters of particular humanist authors. He describes Leonardo Bruni as a “prickly” figure with an “irritable nature” and credits him as an early “transitional figure in the development of the genre from a sober, restrained accusatory or defensive oration to a merciless, vicious catalogue of crimes” featuring the use of “unsolicited, unjustifiable objurgations.”²¹ Rao likewise attributes the quarrels of Filelfo to “Filelfo’s character and that of his antagonists. He was a man of uncommon arrogance... [and] it was inevitable that he should find in [Niccolò] Niccoli, given the latter’s prickly disposition and patronizing attitude, his chief adversary.”²² Not unlike Shepherd and Symonds, Rao is critical of the Poggio-Valla feud and struggles to reconcile the “seriousness” of humanist scholarship with Poggio’s attacks. Rao remarks that Poggio was “resentful of anyone else’s good fortune” and “actively connived to discredit any potential competitor. The

studies. Shepherd is the first source Ennio Rao, discussed below, cites when offering his own short biography of Poggio. Rao, *Curmudgeons*, 53.

¹⁹ Marsh, xi. Marsh’s own surprise—if not shock—is evident shortly thereafter when he notes Petrarch’s preference for “abusive epithets to denigrate his opponents. Quite strikingly, Petrarca employs far more abusive language than the Latin models he cites as precedents.”

²⁰ Rao’s overview of fifteenth-century invective is an important, recent contribution to growing field of Renaissance invective scholarship which I discuss below, pages 229-230.

²¹ Rao, *Curmudgeons*, 10 and 39-41.

²² *Ibid.*, 60-61.

more brilliant his would-be competitors...the more ruthless his methods.”²³ Of Poggio’s fifth invective against Valla, Rao comments “One would expect Poggio to...treat some equally serious subject. Instead...he resorted once against to base *ad hominem* insults.” Rao’s condemnation of polemics is evident in his characterization of the mid-Quattrocento. The Poggio-Valla contest represented for him the “high water mark of the humanist invective” after which “the first generation of humanists gave way to a second, more refined and better suited for sober debates on sophisticated questions.” “The cruel age of dagger and poison,” Rao concludes “was yielding to a milder one (though still cruel by our modern standards).”²⁴ In Rao we find an example of a modern reader who, like nineteenth-century accounts, condemns the “base *ad hominem*” insults of humanist invective and favors conduct he describes as more sober, restrained, and serious.

Although some recent accounts including Rao’s remain focused on the question of character, others have begun to situate humanist conflicts in their professional context. Of particular note are recent studies of the Roman curia and the anxiety humanists experienced in competing for highly coveted, lucrative positions in the papal service. In *The Lost Italian Renaissance* (2004), Christopher Celenza writes of humanist contests that “we cannot properly understand these seemingly exaggerated, immensely vitriolic Renaissance polemics between cultivated individuals...unless we situate the debates where they belong: in the social, political context of the acquisition, protection, and

²³ Ibid., 54. See also Benjamin Kohl’s brief comments. He describes how criticism of Poggio’s Latin style led him to “fume” and try to have Valla assassinated, “but the quarrel soon settled down to a series of bloodless, though savage, invectives on correct Latin style.” Kohl describes Poggio as “not popular with many of his contemporaries” and as “arrogant, mocking, quarrelsome, quick to criticize, quicker to retort and refute with a fine, ironic wit.” Benjamin G. Kohl, introduction to Poggio Bracciolini, *On Avarice*, trans. Kohl and Elizabeth B. Welles, in *The Earthly Republic: Italian Humanists on Government and Society*, ed. Kohl and Ronald G. Witt (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1978), 237.

²⁴ Rao, *Curmudgeons*, 95-97.

maintenance of masculine honor.” Likewise, commenting on the Poggio-Valla dispute, Stephen Greenblatt writes: “the extravagance and bitterness of the charges—in the course of a quarrel over Latin style...discloses something rotten in the inner lives of these impressively learned individuals...These intellectuals were committed to pleasing their masters, on whose patronage they utterly depended, but they were cynical and unhappy.”²⁵ Celenza and Greenblatt both read humanist contests as an outgrowth of the competitive nature of professional life. In their analyses, humanist disputes are not a reflection of an individual’s nature, but instead, humanist anxiety and anger are functions of the demands imposed on scholars by the realities of professional life.

Following recent scholarship on humanist anxiety, I propose to shift the focus of invective studies from a consideration of humanist character to a consideration of humanist context. This shift positions the present chapter to make two primary contributions to the growing field of invective studies. First, although modern readers are certainly reading invective more critically than their predecessors, Rao’s work demonstrates that there is still a tendency to draw moralizing conclusions. Second, Renaissance scholarship has not thoroughly or adequately examined humanist invective as a literary form.²⁶ This is partly because the sources themselves have remained largely

²⁵ Christopher S. Celenza, *The Lost Italian Renaissance: Humanists, Historians, and Latin’s Legacy* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004), 130; Stephen Greenblatt, *The Swerve: How the World Became Modern* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2011), 146. Rao’s *Curmudgeons* offers a surprising treatment of professional context. In his introduction, Rao writes: “The invective’s peak in popularity and artistic quality coincides exactly with the struggle of humanists to win acceptance and respect for their movement and for their personally held ideas.” Rao, *Curmudgeons*, 7. Although Rao gestures towards the demands of scholarly life, his analysis of particular invectives routinely characterizes disputes as a function of individual character, losing sight of his initial and promising framework situating invective in its socio-economic context.

²⁶ Martin Davies argues that although “the invective was a favorite form of the fifteenth-century humanists...The spadework for a full treatment of Renaissance invective remains to be done.” He intends his article to “cover a small part of the ground” associated with invective. Davies, 270. In his work on Facio’s invectives in the 1970’s, Ennio Rao wrote of his intention to produce a monograph on humanist

unavailable—unedited, untranslated, or in manuscript form—before the middle of the twentieth century. Scholars since the 1970s have begun to remedy this and there have been some important recent editions of particular texts, but analyses of these texts or of the genre as a whole have been few. Martin Davies’s article on the invectives against Niccolò Niccoli is an important exception, as are David Rutherford’s introduction to the invectives of Antonio da Rho, Marsh’s introduction to Petrarch’s invectives, and Rao’s *Curmudgeons*.²⁷ These works have identified some of the important tropes that gave humanist invective substance and structure and represent growth in a field of study that, although lagging behind the robust and comparative wealth of studies of classical invective, has begun to recognize and advocate for the value of invective as historical evidence.²⁸ Although scholars are addressing the structure and content of invective more directly than in the past, the field can benefit from additional analyses that not only identify classical tropes but examine them at work in humanist contexts.

Guarino’s invective against Niccoli and Poggio’s against Valla offer an opportunity to reframe the conversation about invective as one not of humanist morality but of humanist literary activity, and thereby to assess invective on its own terms. This

invective, which he published in 2007. In the roughly thirty years between the two works, no other such analysis had appeared. Bartolomeo Facio, *Invective in Laurentium Vallam*, ed. Ennio I. Rao (Naples: Società Editrice Napoletana, 1978), 9. In the introduction to *Curmudgeons*, Rao echoes Davies in noting that “despite the invective’s popularity, the remarkably frequent use which the humanists made of it, and the high regard which they held their compositions in the genre, before the 1950’s the invectives were little known and rarely read, as with a few exceptions they were available only in manuscript form or in rare sixteenth-century editions.” Rao, *Curmudgeons*, 7.

²⁷ For an account of the major editions of Renaissance invective see Rao, *Curmudgeons*, 7-10. For Marsh see note 11. For Rutherford see note 13.

²⁸ See also W. Scott Blanchard’s review of *Early Renaissance Invective and the Controversies of Antonio da Rho*, by David Rutherford, *Renaissance Quarterly* 59, no.4 (Winter 2006): 1167-1169. Blanchard writes about the great value of humanist invective to literary and social historians and notes his surprise that it has garnered so little attention. He credits Rutherford with providing “the groundwork for a more comprehensive investigation” and describes invective as an “understudied genre.” Blanchard, 1168-1169.

analytical shift can help us reconsider our understanding of humanists whose use of invective has resulted in their being cast as bitter, angry, and morose. It has been a recurring argument in previous chapters that Trebizond's character requires reassessment because his attacks on others have been viewed as signs of his personality.²⁹ Trebizond is not the only figure for whom this moralizing analytical tendency is an issue, as the assessments of Poggio above attest. In addition, Diana Robin has argued that Francesco Filelfo's character ought to be reassessed insofar as our historical understanding of him has been unduly influenced by the invectives of his rivals.³⁰ A focus on the literary genre Guarino and Poggio used to make their accusations, including the rules and limits of invective, can help us reassess traditionally distorted humanist portraits. To be clear, I do not contend that individual humanists were not angry or bitter or that assessments of them as such are necessarily incorrect. Instead, I argue that attention ought to be paid to why they may have been so, rather than reducing their actions to a simple problem of character. Humanists were living under a set of circumstances that compelled them to use language in particular ways to meet professional needs. To further contextualize and normalize the language of Guarino and Poggio, and to incorporate some of the newly available translations of humanist invective, I will also occasionally draw parallels in my notes between the invectives of Guarino and Poggio and those of Petrarch, Antonio da Rho, and Trebizond. I will not provide in-depth analyses of these texts here—I have dealt with the Trebizond material in previous chapters—but will refer to them to better

²⁹ Monfasani addresses the problem of Trebizond's reputation. John Monfasani, *George of Trebizond: A Biography and a Study of his Rhetoric and Logic* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1976), 75 and 104.

³⁰ Robin explains that all scholarship on Filelfo has relied on the invectives written against him by his enemies. The result has been an unbalanced assessment of Filelfo's character. Robin, "Reassessment," 211-214. See also her monograph, *Filelfo in Milan: Writings 1451-1477* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1991).

illustrate how humanists used shared literary strategies when they used invective as a vehicle for self-presentation. Guarino, Poggio, and Trebizond were hardly unique in how they crafted their depictions of themselves, a point made clearer by the addition of the voices of Petrarch and Rho. Ultimately, we should be less surprised—or “shocked,” following Marsh—by the language of these erudite, fifteenth-century men. Instead, through continued analysis of newly available sources, we should come to understand that being an erudite man in the competitive environment of early fifteenth-century Italy required the use of strategies that deemed the denigration of an opponent’s honor a key part of audience persuasion.

Guarino’s *In auripellem poetam* (1413/1414)

To begin, I offer a brief overview of each of the two feuds under consideration, the details of which are discussed in my analysis below, to establish time, place, and the individuals involved in each dispute. Guarino wrote his invective against Niccolò Niccoli (1364-1437) in Florence in 1413. Niccoli was a preeminent Florentine intellectual who had dedicated his career to classical antiquities. He was so dedicated that he exhausted his personal wealth and afterward relied on his Medici supporters to finance his pursuits.³¹ He is perhaps most famous for his friendship with Poggio and their joint ventures, which Niccoli frequently funded, to recover lost works of classical writers.³²

³¹ Mark Jurdjevic, “Civic Humanism and the Rise of the Medici,” *Renaissance Quarterly* 52, no.4 (Winter 1999): 1009-1012.

³² For Niccoli’s friendship with Poggio, see *Two Renaissance Book Hunters: The Letters of Poggius Bracciolini to Nicolaus de Niccolis*, trans. Phyllis Walter Goodhart Gordan (New York: Columbia University Press, 1974). See also the recent discussion in Greenblatt, 126-134. Poggio wrote excitedly to Niccoli about his discoveries, including Quintilian’s *Institutio oratoria* and Lucretius’ *De rerum natura*. On the latter, see Greenblatt, 180-181, 203-204. Niccoli transcribed a copy of the Lucretius for himself that served as the basis for “dozens” of further copies.

Niccoli had a reputation for collecting other items as well—art work, goblets, glassware, cameos, and the like—and contemporary accounts describe his home as a museum.³³ His judgment in scholarly matters was highly valued by many, for which reason he enjoyed a position of authority in Florence. In 1410, he invited Guarino to come to the city to teach.³⁴ Guarino was to be the virtual successor to his old instructor Manuel Chrysoloras, who had inaugurated Greek studies in Italy at the end of the fourteenth century. Niccoli controlled the funds for Guarino's position and made similar invitations to Giovanni Aurispa in 1424 and Francesco Filelfo in 1429.³⁵ Guarino began teaching in Florence in March 1410. For Guarino, who became one of the foremost schoolmen of the fifteenth century, it was his first foray into education.

The relationship between Guarino and Niccoli had soured by 1413 when Guarino was unable to accept an offer for the university chair of Greek studies at the Florentine *Studio* because of Niccoli's opposition.³⁶ We can only rely on Guarino's accusations—

³³ Greenblatt and Alison Brown both discuss how Poggio's copy of Lucretius almost became a piece in Niccoli's collection. He held the copy for twelve years. Greenblatt, 208-209; Alison Brown, "Lucretius and the Epicureans in the Social and Political Context of Renaissance Florence," *I Tatti Studies in the Italian Renaissance* 9 (2001): 11-12. Poggio expressed his discontent in a letter to Niccoli in December 1429. Poggio Bracciolini, *Lettere*, ed. H. Harth, vol. 1 (Florence: L.S. Olschki, 1984), 89.

³⁴ For an overview of the Guarino-Niccoli feud see Rao, *Curmudgeons*, 29-31.

³⁵ Trebizond taught briefly in Florence as well. Monfasani reports that when Trebizond was in Venice in 1433 he so impressed Ambrogio Traversari that Traversari recommended him to Niccoli for the chair of Greek studies in Florence. The chair was currently held by Filelfo, but Traversari wrote that he considered Trebizond the superior scholar. Monfasani, *George of Trebizond*, 24. It should be noted that Traversari was also one of Filelfo's main detractors, which may have influenced his glowing recommendation. See Robin, "Reassessment," 203-204. Monfasani adds that Trebizond taught in Florence during the period 1440-1442. He may have taught between the years 1438-1439 as well, though Monfasani is skeptical of the evidence for that period discovered by Park. See *Collectanea*, 856 and K. Park, "The Readers of the Florentine Studio According to Communal Fiscal Records (1357-1380; 1413-1446)," *Rinascimento* 20 (1980): 296.

³⁶ The feud is discussed in Remigio Sabbadini, *Vita di Guarino Veronese* (Genoa: Istituto Sordo-Mutti, 1891), 19-21. Martin Davies, note 4, drew new attention to it and others have followed him. See Marianne Pade, *The Reception of Plutarch's Lives in Fifteenth-Century Italy*, vol. 1 (Copenhagen: Museum Tusculanum Press, 2007), 167-169 and Anthony Grafton, *Commerce with the Classics: Ancient Books and Renaissance Readers* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1997), 39-40.

that Niccoli was jealous of a fellow student and blamed Guarino for not expelling the other man and that Niccoli was angry that Guarino would not loan him books—to account for Niccoli’s campaign against Guarino.³⁷ The loss of the position indicates the socio-economic consequences of humanist quarrels. Guarino left Florence in the summer of 1414—Davies speculates this may have been because Niccoli was appointed as one of the annual officials of the Florentine *Studio* that May—and travelled to Venice with Francesco Barbaro. Guarino’s troubles with Niccoli inspired him to pen a letter addressed to his friend Biagio Guasconi expressing his complaints in either 1413 or 1414.³⁸ Guarino later expanded and revised the piece for a wider audience, reflecting his concern in crafting his public image, and titled it *In auripellem poetam*.³⁹ The title offers a sense of Guarino’s criticisms. *Auripellis*, as Rao notes, is gold-leaf, “an alloy made of copper, zinc, and tin leaf used to give base substances the appearance of gold.” The title can thus be read as *Against the Fake Poet*.⁴⁰

Guarino’s invective is a clear sign of humanist anxiety regarding reputation and of the pressures of scholarly life in Florence. Letters such as his are filled with complaints about the damage rumor and insult could do to one’s reputation. Looking back in 1423 on his time in Florence Guarino lamented how “there was no day in Florence when I wasn’t tormented by insults, arguments, and petty quarrels.” He added that there was “such

³⁷ Guarino’s accusations are discussed in detail below, pages 255-256 and 261-263.

³⁸ Davies, 271-273. Davies writes that although “the date of the redactions is not ascertainable with certainty,” evidence in both versions points to them both having been written sometime in the period 1413-1414. For Guasconi see Dale Kent, *The Rise of the Medici: Faction in Florence, 1426-1434* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978), 319-321.

³⁹ Unless otherwise noted, my analysis is of the revised version. I cite letter as *IAP* and provide the line numbers according to Sabbadini’s edition. The *IAP* is ep. 17 in *Epistolario di Guarino Veronese*, ed. Remigio Sabbadini, vol. 1, *Testo* (Venice: A spese della società, 1915), 33-46.

⁴⁰ Rao, *Curmudgeons*, 32.

wicked madness, such avarice for glory...that in order to get it people have no regard for the reputations of others.” Describing the animosity among those in Florence, Guarino described how “rather than friendships, there are political alliances” between people. Guarino was not alone in his complaints. Giovanni Aurispa (1376-1459), who taught in Florence for one year, 1425-1426, echoed Guarino’s sentiments in 1426: “here feuding and intriguing go on everywhere; I can find no peace of mind at all. The whole place is full of hostility and petty jealousies: here all the *literati*, all the elite are engaged in backbiting, and there is paranoia everywhere.”⁴¹ For Guarino, invective offered a means to address his anxiety, appeal to his peers, and exercise a measure of control over his conflict with Niccoli.

Poggio’s *Invectiva in L. Vallam Prima* (February 1452)

No account of humanist invective can be complete without Poggio, one of the most accomplished polemicists of the early Quattrocento. He made observations about the professional environment in the Roman curia similar to those Guarino and Aurispa made about Florence. Poggio’s *Facetiae*, a collection of anecdotes and jokes told in the curia, describes how “at the Roman Court, good Fortune generally prevails, and there is but seldom room for talent or honesty; everything is obtained through intrigue or luck, not to mention money.”⁴² It was in the curia that Poggio waged his famous campaign

⁴¹ The translations of both letters are Robin’s. Robin, “Reassessment,” 217-218. For Guarino’s letter, see ep. 245 in *Epistolario*, ed. Sabbadini, 382-384. Guarino and Niccoli had long since reconciled by 1423. Guarino writes that Niccoli was trying to draw him back to Florence. For Aurispa’s letter, see *Carteggio di Giovanni Aurispa*, ed. Remigio Sabbadini (Rome: Tipografia del Senato, 1931), 41. For Aurispa’s appointment in Florence see Paul Grendler, *The Universities of the Italian Renaissance* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002), 209.

⁴² Poggio Bracciolini, *The Facetiae or Jocular Tales of Poggio*, 2 vols. (Paris: Isidore Liseux, 1879), 1:49-50. In Curia Romana ut plurimum Fortuna dominatur, cum perraro locus sit vel ingenio, vel virtuti; sed ambitione et opportunitate parantur omnia, ut de nummis sileam, qui ubique terrarum imperare videntur.

against Lorenzo Valla (1407-1457). His first invective against Valla was the initial volley in a feud that lasted from early 1452 through the first half of 1453.⁴³ The cause of the conflict was Poggio's discovery that Francesco Rosi—a Catalan pupil of Valla's—had criticized Poggio's style, claiming that it included barbarisms. Poggio blamed Valla for the affront and responded with his first *oratio* in February 1452, defending himself and attacking Valla's *Elegantiae*. Valla replied with the first three “books” of his *Antidotum* against Poggio, addressed to Nicholas V, between May and June 1452.⁴⁴ Six months later, Poggio had written three more orations while Valla was trying to keep pace, working first on his *Apologus* against Poggio and then a second *Antidotum*. Poggio released a fifth oration before Valla could publish his second *Antidotum*.⁴⁵ Their quarrel began in the curia but spread after Poggio left Rome to become chancellor in Florence in 1453. The dispute was public knowledge and divided humanists into camps supporting

The theme is repeated in 1:57-58. For secondary sources on humanist anxiety in the Roman curia, see Celenza, *Lost*, 123-133; Celenza, *Renaissance Humanism and the Papal Curia: Lapo da Castiglionchio the Younger's De curiae commodis* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1999); Greenblatt, 135-154.

⁴³ For Poggio's first invective against Valla, hereafter cited as *Oratio* I, see Poggio Bracciolini, *Opera Omnia*, ed. T. Tonelli, 4 vols. (Basel, 1538; rpt. Turin, 1964-1969), 1:188-205. In the secondary literature, the standard account is Salvatore Camporeale, *Lorenzo Valla: Umanesimo e Teologia* (Florence: 1972). For Camporeale's analysis from Poggio's perspective, see “Poggio Bracciolini versus Lorenzo Valla: The *Orationes in Laurentium Vallam*,” in *Perspectives on Early Modern and Modern Intellectual History*, ed. Joseph Marino and Melinda W. Schlitt (Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press), 27-49. See also Rao, *Curmudgeons*, 87-98. For older accounts and particularly for their discussion of invective see Shepherd, 443-452 and Symonds, 174-177.

⁴⁴ Poggio's feuds with Trebizond and Valla therefore occurred concurrently. In the first *Antidotum*, Valla claims Trebizond punched Poggio and mocks Poggio for it. Likewise, in his March 1453 letter to Poggio, Trebizond criticized Poggio for his “childish” dispute with Valla. For further discussion see Chapter Three, pages 135-139 and Chapter Four, page 191. The overlapping conflicts may help explain why Poggio appeared relatively restrained in his treatment of Trebizond after the curia fight. Trebizond's letters were understandably passionate given his *ipso facto* exile to Naples but Poggio issued only a short response in February 1453. In the battle for public opinion, Trebizond's wielding of the sword against Poggio probably damaged his reputation enough that Poggio thought he did not have to engage in a protracted literary battle, especially since he was already in one with Valla.

⁴⁵ For Poggio's *orationes*, the “books”—I use Camporeale's description of the compositions—of Valla's *Antidotum*, and Valla's *Apologus* see Camporeale, “Poggio,” 29.

each man. The Poggio-Valla invectives have historically been recognized as some of the most virulent of the Quattrocento.⁴⁶

The feud with Valla was far from Poggio's first foray into invective. Unlike Guarino, who largely avoided conflicts and so cultivated a reputation as relatively restrained, Poggio frequently engaged in literary duels, including one with Guarino himself.⁴⁷ The so-called Scipio-Caesar controversy in 1435 about the merits of the respective generals attracted attention in Florence and Ferrara. The controversy was mild by Poggio's standards.⁴⁸ Far more virulent were Poggio's four invectives against Filelfo begun in 1433 in Florence.⁴⁹ Their dispute was an extension of the political struggle between the Medici and the oligarchic republicans led by the Albizzi.⁵⁰ When Filelfo wrote against Cosimo de' Medici he incurred the man's wrath, for which he was left scarred by a knife attack and forced into exile, both of which indicate the possible consequences of humanist literary activity.⁵¹ He also brought upon himself the anger of

⁴⁶ See the descriptions of the dispute by Symonds and Rao above, pages 226-228.

⁴⁷ If Guarino wrote as Agaso against Trebizond, that feud can be added to his list of quarrels. Cf. Chapter Two, pages 30-31.

⁴⁸ I discuss the controversy in Chapter Three, note 24. Poggio referred to the dispute when he censured Trebizond's invective against Guarino in response to the Agaso letter. Poggio held himself as a model of virtuous, moderate behavior claiming he had treated Guarino with respect during their dispute. *Poggii Epistolae*, ed. T. Tonelli, 3 vols. (Florence, 1832-1861), 2:125-128.

⁴⁹ The first three are printed in Poggio, *Opera*, 1:164-187. The fourth is in Ernst Walser, *Poggius Florentinus: Leben und Werke* (Leipzig: Teubner, 1914), 461-472.

⁵⁰ For the relationship between Florentine politics and the *Studio* see Grendler, *Universities*, 21; Robin, "Reassessment," 202-204; Kent, 234-235.

⁵¹ The knife attack occurred in May 1433 when, as Grendler relates, "a person hired by an associate of Cosimo's attacked Filelfo with a knife in an attempt to drive him from the city." Grendler, *Universities*, 213. For a discussion of Filelfo's various accounts of the incident see Robin, *Milan*, 17-21. While in exile, Filelfo composed his treatise *On the Disadvantages of Exile*. Francesco Filelfo, *On Exile*, ed. Jeroen de Keyser and trans. W. Scott Blanchard (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2013).

the Florentine elite who supported Cosimo, including Poggio.⁵² Poggio still bore ill-will against Filelfo after relocating to the curia, as is evident in Poggio's reporting more than one story mocking Filelfo in his *Facetiae*.⁵³ One story tells how a demon visited Filelfo in his dreams and offered him a magic ring which, if Filelfo kept it on, would assure his spouse's fidelity.⁵⁴ Filelfo awoke with his finger in his wife's vagina. "That ring is indeed a first rate preservative for jealous husbands," joked Poggio, "and secures them against their wives being unchaste without their knowledge." The tale cast Filelfo as a foolish cuckold, a common early modern form of slander.⁵⁵ Elsewhere, Poggio targeted Filelfo's family with a story about how his father "wore silk in the morning." Not content to let the joke go unexplained, Poggio clarified that this meant Filelfo was the bastard son of a

⁵² Symonds, in another example of nineteenth-century disgust with invective, refused to report any of the particular insults of the Poggio-Filelfo conflict. He described only how the combatants "heaped upon each other all the insults it is possible for the most corrupt imagination to conceive," how Poggio "poured a torrent of the filthiest calumnies upon Filelfo's wife and mother," and how "All the resources of the Latin language were exhausted by the combatants in their endeavours to befoul each other's character." Symonds, 171-174.

⁵³ The *Facetiae* are discussed here as a way of establishing Poggio's reputation as a polemicist. Beyond that, Trebizond implicitly mentioned the *Facetiae* in his letter to his son Andreas from Naples when discussing the supposedly-forged letter plots. In that letter, he claimed Poggio was a poor Latinist who had written nothing but invective and some "shameful stories." *Collectanea*, 123.

Poggio was not alone composing these kinds of tales. The other major work of this kind in the early Quattrocento was *The Hermaphrodite* of Antonio Beccadelli, commonly known as Panormita, discussed below, note 129. He and Poggio defended their compositions as a form of mental relaxation. Holt Parker, introduction to *The Hermaphrodite*, by Antonio Beccadelli, ed. and trans. Holt Parker (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010), xxii. Antonio da Rho's invective against Panormita, edited by Rutherford, is highly critical of *The Hermaphrodite*. See note 13.

⁵⁴ Unless otherwise noted, I rely on the English of the anonymous translator. Bracciolini, *Facetiae*, 2:20-21. Franciscus Philelphus, zelotypus uxoris, summa cura torquebatur, ne cum altero rem haberet, semper dies ac noctes ad ejus custodiam intentus. Huic dormienti, per somnium...visus est Daemon quidam uxoris securitatem polliceri, si quae admoneret, vellet facere..."Cape hunc," ille inquit, "annulum diligenter in digito serva. Nam dum in eo gestaveris hunc, nunquam uxor, te inscio, cum alio concumbet." Prae gaudio excitatus a somno, sensit se digitum habere in uxoris cunno. Optimum quidem ejus annuli zelotypis remedium, ne uxores, ignorantibus viris, possint esse incontinentes.

⁵⁵ For similar examples see *Ibid.*, 1:19-21, 1:134-135, and 2:154-155. On cuckoldry and late medieval and early modern masculinity see Derek G. Neal, *The Masculine Self in Late Medieval England* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2008), 73-74.

priest, since morning is when “officiating priests are generally clothed with silk.”⁵⁶ The very next story criticized Filelfo’s sexual misconduct, specifically his “kidnapping” of his wife, the daughter of his Greek instructor John Chrysoloras, and his “having taken with him to Greece, on account of his handsome form, a certain young man of Padua.”⁵⁷ These were common accusations against Filelfo, whose opponents ably wielded classical tropes of sexual misconduct to denigrate him.⁵⁸

Poggio was, as his public affair with Filelfo demonstrates, a practiced polemicist by 1452 and his quarrel with Valla. To understand the function of his polemics, however, and not simply to view them as an expression of the author’s character or his subject’s behavior, I turn now to the shared tropes humanists used. First is an examination of an oft-repeated claim in fifteenth-century invective, the provocation defense.

Provocation and Reluctance: A Defense of Invective

Humanist invectives often began with the author’s protest that, although reluctant to do so, he had been provoked into writing against an antagonist. The provocation-reluctance defense was no stale *topos* but the foundation of humanist attacks

⁵⁶ Bracciolini, *Facetiae*, 2:104-105. Cum in palatio Apostolico, in coetu Secretariorum, cui et multi viri doctissimi (ut solet) aderant, sermo de impura inquinataque vita scelestissimi hominis, Francisci Philelphi, ortus esset, multique multa in eum scelera coniecissent, quaesivit quispiam, an Philelphus genere nobilis esset. Tum unus contribulis ejus, optimus vir et admodum facetus, vultu ad gravitatem composito: “Apprime,” inquit, “maxima is fulget nobilitate, nam pater ejus semper mane vestes sericas induebat,” denotas eum sacerdotis filium. Vestimenta enim, quibus presbyteri in sacris utuntur, ut plurimum serica existunt.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 2:105-106. Tum alter non injucundus vir: “Non mirum est,” inquit, “si, nepos Jovis, gesta parentum imitatus, et alteram Europam rapuit, et alterum Ganymedem,” denotans eum et virginem Graecam, Joannis Chrysolorae filiam, ab eo stupratam in Italiam advexisse, et quemdam adolescentem Patavinum ab eo propter formam in Graeciam advectum.

⁵⁸ Traversari and Poggio both criticized Filelfo’s affair with Chrysoloras’s wife, the mother of his bride-to-be. In his fourth *Invective*, Poggio writes that Filelfo “abominably betrayed his own host, John Chrysoloras. After all, first he seduced Chrysoloras’s wife, and then in violation of all decency he corrupted Chrysoloras’s daughter, a virgin—whom he afterwards married.” The translation is Robin’s. Robin, “Reassessment,” 213.

and an illustration of how invective had discernible rules.⁵⁹ Writers could not afford to be viewed as unjust. In order to use language that their peers might otherwise judge too abusive, they had to demonstrate that their opponents had violated accepted ethical norms. Invective was surely a weapon, but the battle was not “carried on without ground rules.” Nor was the aim “to overcome the enemy by any means.”⁶⁰ Humanists who issued insults without demonstrating sufficient cause exposed themselves to ridicule, as Poggio’s letter to Christopher Cauchus in 1437 illustrates. Poggio chastised Trebizond’s behavior as imprudent precisely because he thought Trebizond had written too harshly against Guarino and had done so without proof.⁶¹

Humanist declarations of reluctance and provocation had classical antecedents. Cicero’s trial speeches often included claims of reluctance, followed by an *apologia* in which he detailed the social obligations—such as the friendship of his clients—that compelled him to speak. The technique required establishing an obligation sufficient to overcome the advocate’s initial reluctance to speak against another.⁶² For humanists, that obligation derived from an opponent’s provocation and the writer’s concern for his own reputation. For both the classical and early modern orator, the goal was to contrast an opponent’s arrogance with one’s own modesty. The *De oratore* addressed arrogance

⁵⁹ Davies, 272n. Davies argues that Guarino’s stated reluctance “to attack his one-time benefactor” was an “obligatory *topos*, based on ancient practice, and not in evidence after the opening statement.” While certainly a classical *topos*, this phrasing underplays the significance of the provocation defense, which rests at the base of all subsequent attacks.

⁶⁰ Rao, like Davies, identifies expressed reluctance as a trope. Rao, *Curmudgeons*, 20-21 and 25.

⁶¹ *Poggii Epistolae*, 2:127-128. Poggio argues that “when something ought to be fought with reason...voices bursting with insults and abuses, which to those listening are unpleasant...render our case less commendable.”

⁶² Sarah Culpepper Stroup identifies this as a “rhetorical technique of which Cicero is most fond.” She examines his arguments in the *Pro Caelio*. Stroup, *Catullus, Cicero, and a Society of Patrons: The Generation of the Text* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 173-177. Cic., *Cael.* 2.5-6. Socrates’s *Apology*, though not an invective, is an example of the rhetorical claim of reluctance.

when discussing the damage to an orator's case if he attacked without care. The treatise noted how the public "dislikes mockery of the wretched, except perhaps if these bear themselves arrogantly" and added as well that "there is a rule excluding remarks made in bad taste."⁶³ Humanists justified invective by casting opponents as arrogant provocateurs and themselves as reluctant and therefore modest defenders of their reputation and honor.

Guarino begins his *In auripellem poetam* (hereafter, *IAP*) with a provocation defense that establishes the two main *personae* of his invective, his enemy an arrogant, immoral slanderer and himself a long-suffering, reluctant victim.⁶⁴ His argument contrasts themes of reasoned restraint and an emotional lack of control.⁶⁵ He writes to Guasconi that he "often wished to report to you the behavior of this boisterous [*animosus*] man" but had not yet because "I was indeed always eager to honor, observe, and venerate him." Times had changed, however, and he could no longer remain silent because his patience [*patientia*] with Niccoli had only allowed a "more unbridled impudence in slander" to emerge. Worse, his silence had led others to believe Niccoli's claims that Guarino had harmed him. Guarino demonstrates concern about his reputation because of Niccoli's slander and laments "absolutely nothing in human affairs will you find more deceitful than reputation [*fama*]." It is because of Niccoli's abuse that Guarino begs [*oro*] Guasconi, and entreats [*obsecro*] his *humanitas*, to listen to his story.

⁶³ Cic., *De or.* 2.237-239.

⁶⁴ The strategies of Guarino and Poggio were not unique, as I argue above, pages 230-232. Claims of provocation and reluctance are evident also in Petrarch, *Invectives against a Physician*, in *Francesco Petrarca: Invectives*, ed. Marsh, 1.1. "The struggle between us is not fair, I confess. There are places where you may strike me, but none where I may strike you back...you force me into a contest that I would never have entered willingly, and I must therefore speak. ...If I remained silent in my contempt for your affairs—as occurs to me at times—you might take pleasure in my silence. So I shall reply to several charges, asking the reader's forgiveness, but not yours, if I say anything that runs counter to my nature." All translations of Petrarch are Marsh's. I refer to the section numbers Marsh provides.

⁶⁵ These themes are explored in Chapter Three and relative to a discussion of masculinity in Chapter Four.

Guarino's invective is a direct appeal to those who would read the letter, whose verdict regarding the dispute would determine how the reputations of both men would fare.

Niccoli, Guarino explains, provokes [*provoco*] him with shameful letters, which justifies the writing of an invective: "Truly, just as I consider it petulant and arrogant to insult and revile, so I consider responding and 'returning insult for insult to be civil and lawful.'" ⁶⁶

The main components of Guarino's provocation defense—patience, silence, and a concern for his own reputation—are also evident in Poggio's attacks against Valla. Like Guarino, Poggio justifies his invective by painting his adversary as an arrogant slanderer. He first remarks on the danger that abuse holds for the reputation of the abused: "It ought to be the duty of a prudent man to drive off injury, to repel abuse, in which the glory of

⁶⁶ *IAP*, 1-34. Volui saepenumero animosi mores hominis ad te perscribere...Ceterum veritus ne, quae toleratu pergravia erant, auditu quoque fastidiosa fierent, destiti; quippe cum ob conceptas de illo virtutes eum adeo colere observare venerarique semper studuerim, ut indignum censuerim eius acerbissimam et sibimet intolerandam consuetudinem ferre non posse, ne parum constans et vere puerilis nostra diceretur amicitia; sed profecto nihil humanis in rebus fallacius fama reperies. Verum cum hoc in dies malum crescat, diutius agere silentium nequeo, praesertim cum ipsum cernam ex patientia mea effrenatorem maledicendi petulantiam comparasse et tacente me suspiciari aliquos intelligam ipsum a me insigni quadam lacessitum iniuria, conscientiae obiectantes quod venerationis existebat. Audias igitur oro non omnia, sed pauca de multis, quoniam apud peritissimas aures tuas haud prolixioribus agi convenit, qui nostrum utrunque pernosti. Qua quidem in re si quid tuas forsitan aures offenderit, humanitatem tuam maiorem in modum obsecro, ne mihi qui coactus ad respondendum venio, sed ipsi qui tam procacem primus sermonem introduxit succenseas; qui postquam indignissimis me modis habuerit, ne hoc quoque iniuriarum genus intentatum omitteret, probrosis et vere eo dignis me tacitum quidem ac latitantem provocat epistulis. Ego vero ut convitiari et maledicere petulans superbumque arbitror, ita respondere et 'remaledicere civile fasque iudico.' Cf. Suet. *Vesp.* 9.

Leonardo Bruni makes the same justifications in his 1424 *Oratio in nebulonem maledicum* against Niccoli. Like the *IAP*, Bruni's invective was originally composed as a letter and addressed to Poggio, a friend he shared in common with Niccoli. For a discussion of Bruni's *Oratio*, see Davies, 282-283. Leonardo Bruni to Poggio Bracciolini, 1424, in *Leonardi Bruni Arretini Epistolarum Libri VIII*, ed. Lorenzo Mehus (Florence, 1741), 5:17-25. Bruni had responded to Niccoli's abuse, he explains, with mildness [*lenitudo*, *patientia*] because of their friendship, but Niccoli's slander [*maledictum*] had provoked him and he warns that Niccoli's rejection of his patience will be reason enough for him to "draw the sword of speech against this provocateur." Ibid., 5:17-18. Sed quoniam ille est lingua procaci, & odiosa, nec in extremo quidem mundi angulo quietum esse te ab iis molestiis passus est, ac maligna quaedam, ut sentio, diversaque a vero fugessit...; Ibid., 5:18-19. Respondebo maledictis ejus, qui me tam acerbe, & intolerabiliter provocat?; Ibid., 5:24-25. Sed ego certa ratione id feci: vel quia contemno hominem praesertim insanum & furem, vel quia rationem habere malui superioris amicitiae, quam justis doloris mei. Id vero difficilior michi fuit, quod ille nichil pensi habet, nullo respectu superioris conjunctionis retinetur, sed in maledictis continue perseverat, ut verear jam, ne lenitudo ista mea ad ignaviam & socordiam michi imputetur. Tu es primus, ad quem de his rebus scripserim, & hoc excitatus litteris tuis. Nam ipse tacere constitueram. Quod si tandem rejecta patientia gladium orationis in hunc provocatorem strinxero; faciam ut omnes intelligant, quantum sibi lucrum fuerat in istam dimicationem non descendisse.

honor and esteem or the reputations of genius seems to be led into danger by enemies.”

As for silence and patience, however, he explains that some will say it is more honorable to “think nothing of the words of a stupid and plainly insane man, who in the manner of a demented person and madman rashly attacks all learned men.”⁶⁷ “I would admit,” he continues, that “it is better to remain silent now and then against those possessed in spirit and mind” if not for the opinion of Sallust that “wickedness may become more flagrant whenever you disregard it.”⁶⁸ Poggio thus maintains that “it is very often necessary to castigate the insane,” for which reason “I follow the opinion of the people who think it just that he who has been provoked by an injury return the favor.”⁶⁹ Poggio’s language is more inflammatory than Guarino’s, particularly regarding his opponent’s irrational

⁶⁷ *Oratio* I, 188. Si quibus in rebus honestum est consensusque omnium permissum, iniuriam propulsare, in his maxime prudentis officium hominis esse debet, ut contumeliam depellat, in quibus honoris & existimationis laus aut ingenij fama a maliuolis in discrimen adduci videatur. Conscium enim eorum quae obijciuntur se facere existimatur, qui taciturnitate utitur pro defensione, quoniam censentur quasi conscientia ductus non esse ausus improborum maledicentiae respondere. Quod si dissoluti esse hominis Cicero inquit, spernere quid de se quisque sentiat & loquatur, multo dissolutionis uideri potest, ea contemnere, quae in suam ignominiam & contumeliam sint descripta. Dicet forte aliquis, honestioris officij fuisse futurum, pro nihilo ducere stulti palamque insani hominis uerba, qui dementis ac furiosi more in omnes doctos uiros, baculo nescio quo stulticiae proteruaque iactantia temere incursat.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 188. Faterer satius esse quandoque tacere aduersus animo & mente captos, nisi secundum Salustij sententiam: malus fieret improbius ubi negligas. Et satis compertum est saepius ex reticentia animos illis adijci ad contumeliam inferendam. Itaque existimans persaepe necessarium esse castigare insanos, quo caeteri sint ad iniuriam tardiores, sequar uulgi opinionem, qui iustum putant lacessitum iniuria parem gratiam referre; Cf. *Sal. Bel. Iug.* 31.

Poggio made this argument in his February 1453 letter to Trebizond, who accused him of sending assassins to Naples. He dismissed the accusation and countered “I will regard your words as much as those of an irascible man...I will certainly neither betray my standards because of your false accusations, nor will I vie with you by means of disgraceful words, but instead by virtue.” He added “since the whole thing [the assassination plot accusation] is nothing, it may be honorable that I also offer you no response.” *Poggii Epistolae*, 3:50. The argument became a point of contention. Trebizond replied that Poggio could not feign silence since he issued a reply: “You received letters, you now return letters.” Walser, 507.

⁶⁹ Cf. Guarino’s similar argument about returning insults, note 66. Antonio da Rho uses the same language in his *Philippic* against Panormita. See *The Philippic of Antonio da Rho against Antonio Panormita*, in *Early Renaissance Invective*, ed. Rutherford, 51-189. Hereafter, I cite the text as *Philippic* and provide the section numbers of Rutherford’s edition. *Philippic*, 58. Aequae nunc tu, si lubet, quantum ad nos attinet, par pari referto, uel si excisionem timet, deponat ipse gladium; ego scutum abiiciam. Rutherford cites the reference to Ter., *Eun.* 445 and a comparison to Cic., *Fam.* 20.19.

nature, but his argument remains the same. Poggio claims Valla's provocation justifies his own attacks and that it is fair to respond to an injury in kind.

A common way of framing the provocation argument was to accuse an opponent of *maledicta*—that is scurrilous language and false accusations—a strategy both Guarino and Poggio used. The intent was to amplify an opponent's arrogance and to make more acceptable one's criticisms of him.⁷⁰ Alleged scurrilous language, of course, typically concerned another's reputation. Humanists also distinguished between true, fair accusations, and slander, *maledictum* or *convicium*.⁷¹ Guarino accused Niccoli of the latter.⁷² He claimed that he knew Niccoli had written against him and that Guasconi had read the letter.⁷³ Guarino attacked Niccoli's manhood by accusing him of a childish lack of restraint, noting "these are the things he imbibed after the very long labors of his

⁷⁰ Cic., *De or.* 2.237. See for instance the claim that the public "dislike mockery of the wretched, expect perhaps if these bear themselves arrogantly."

⁷¹ Rutherford, 21. "In the Roman court, an invective that went too far would be regarded not as legitimate invective (*accusatio*) but malediction (*maledictum* or *convicium*), that is, as mere insulting or cursing one's opponent." Cf. Trebizond's invective against Guarino. Trebizond argues that if he does not defend himself and his work, Guarino will simply hurl accusations [*convicia*] unopposed. He describes the attack on his Christianity as evidence of Guarino's *maledicendi libido* and ends his invective by calling on him to repent his *maledicta* against Greece. *Collectanea*, 392-393 and 407.

⁷² *IAP*, 15-34. ...praesertim cum ipsum cernam ex patientia mea effrenatiorem maledicendi petulantiam... Ego vero ut convitiari et maledicere petulans superbumque arbitror... See note 66.

⁷³ *IAP*, 42-59. Et ne longius vager, legisti scio quandam ex sapientissimo illius vertice contra me depromptam nuper epistulam, eam perinde ac alteram ex cerebro Iovis oriundam Minervam admiratus. Cum ibi lacteum eloquentiae fluxum et singularem hominis modestiam contemplabare, plusne salis an leporis inter legendum offenderis, haud facile dixeris. Quas res post longissimos studiorum suorum labores ad quinquagesimum aetatis annum hausit. Non usquequaque verum est quod aiunt: 'secundo puerascere senes?' An legendo potius homini succensebas, propterea quod cum hospes philosophiae credi velit cuius tamen acerbissimus hostis est non nisi contra philosophiae praecepta eructantem animadvertebas? Ubi eius vitam et ingenium linguae procacitas, ni fallor, indicat; a praesentibus enim praeterita declarantur et manifestis occulta produntur. Nec qui tam sordidis verbis utitur, non spurcus esse potest; quoniam, quemadmodum ait Isocrates, 'mentis effigies extat oratio.' Erumpentem aspiciebas iram invidiam avaritiam et aestuantis stomachi spumantem ab ore rabiem...

On Guarino's charge that Niccoli wrote against him first, I know of no such letter and suspect this may be a false claim. Niccoli rarely responded to his opponents. When Filelfo wrote against him it was Poggio who defended him, sparking the Poggio-Filelfo exchange. Robin, "Reassessment," 204. Davies writes "It is characteristic that he [Niccoli] never published any reply to these attacks, nor does he seem even to have considered doing so." Davies, 270.

studies into his fiftieth year. Is it not altogether true what they say: ‘old men become boys a second time’?” He charged Niccoli with being the first in the quarrel to use shameless [*procax*] language, and to write with a “shamelessness [*procacitas*] of language,” that, “unless I am mistaken, indicates his life and character.”⁷⁴ “He who uses such sordid words,” he explained, can only be foul because “as Isocrates says, ‘speech is the likeness of the mind’.” Niccoli’s abuse, he continued, derived from his passions: “You observed anger, envy, avarice, and madness bursting forth from the mouth of one in a roiling temper.” Guarino later charged Niccoli with a variety of abuses: he obstinately opposes those who correct him, he refuses to yield to instructors, he disparages students, enviously attacks learned men with *maledicta*, slanders men in their absence, and insults his friends with *convitia*.⁷⁵ Convinced that he cannot win glory for his own accomplishments, Niccoli has turned instead to winning fame for his *maledicta*, like “the man who, it is said, burned down the Temple of Diana.”⁷⁶ These allegations, scattered throughout the invective, are natural extensions of the provocation argument. They justify Guarino’s invective and are key components of his portrait of Niccoli.

⁷⁴ For the accusation that Niccoli was the first to use shameful language see note 66. Cf. Panormita’s “second childhood.” *Philippic*, 50. Aut si fortasse, quod liquet, repuerescit rhetorumque coniecturas oblitus est, dignus iam fit, qui obolum accipiat, ad emendas nuces et migret.

⁷⁵ *IAP*, 177-195. Immo qui his hominibus morbus est iste noster emendaturis contumacius adversatur, cedere monitoribus indignatur, discentis obtrectat, doctos per invidiam maledictis insectatur, eos absentis tamen lacerat et cum ipsis capitalis exercet inimicitias....Omitto pietatem in suos, amicitiam et caritatem in universos. Ei profecto delicatus est sensus; amicos ut pisces amat, quos e vestigio nisi recentes aspernatur et convitiis insultat.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 205-210. Quanquam quid de huius mirandum est latratibus, cui singula passim mordere propositum perstat, ut qui bene agendo gloriam nequit aucupari, saltem maledicendo famosus evadat, sicut olim qui Dianae templum Ephesiae concremasse dicitur...?

Cf. Valerius Maximus 8.14 ext.5. Cf. *Philippic*, 42. “You look a lot like the fellow who, since he was a nobody and incapable of a good deed that would bring him renown, burned the Temple of Diana...When the rulers of Ephesus asked why he’d done it, he responded: ‘Since I was incapable of good, I might become famous through evil.’”

Poggio, like Guarino, substantiated his provocation argument through a discussion of *maledicta* and *convicia*, though again he was more aggressive than Guarino. For example, he often labeled Valla a *conuitiator*, but he was also far more likely than Guarino to cast Valla as irrational by likening him to a madman or his actions to those of a violent beast. Valla was, according to Poggio, not only a very ignorant slanderer [*imperitissimus conuitiator*], but also a mad bawler [*latrator furibundus*], demented slanderer [*conuitiator demens*], and frenzied slanderer [*vesanus conuitiator*].⁷⁷ Elsewhere, Poggio accused Valla of attacking Aristotle, Varro, Cicero, “and the other most distinguished men in teaching and in eloquence,” tearing them apart with his snarling teeth.⁷⁸ Delivering his own *apologia*, Poggio cited Valla’s violence as the reason why he “thought it necessary...to check...the disgrace of this depraved detractor.” Valla was no true, rational man but instead demented. Poggio also repeatedly described him as an insane beast [*insana belua*].⁷⁹ Poggio counted himself among Valla’s victims. He recalled how when “the most dishonorable and petulant man” had come upon some of his

⁷⁷ *Oratio* I, 200. Valla imperitissimus conuitiator...; *Ibid.*, 197. Valla latrator furibundus, conuitiator demens, rabula foraneus...; *Ibid.*, 203. Iste vesanus conuitiator, superiorum omnium autoritate semota, nova sensa verbis indidit... I discuss Poggio’s use of *latrator* below, pages 259-260.

⁷⁸ *Oratio* I, 188. Non me esse maioris doctrinae, non autoritatis quam fuerit Aristoteles, Varro, Marcus Cicero, Salustius, Lactantius, Boethius, caeterique praestantissimi doctrina & eloquentia uiri, quos amens ille dente suo canino & in rabiem uerso petulanti nimium lacerat ac reprehendit, praeterundos esse aequo uultu publice insanos & eorum incursus leuiter perferendos... Hac ego fretus opinione, nequissimi detractoris infamiam (qui liuore & inuidia commotus solita dementia in me prosiliuit) saltem uerbis necessario mihi censui refrenandam.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 194. ...in quem inuehere insana haec belua non praesumat... See note 93 below; *Oratio* I, 194. Nunc quoniam ignorantis beluae exhalantem foetorem paulum compressimus... See note 167; *Oratio* I, 204. Elephantum currum ducent, quo beluae ingentes ingentiorum trahant... See note 174; *Oratio* I, 205. Gloriantur insula belua, se Bartholomeum Fatium, & Antonium Panormitam uiros doctissimos suique dissimilimos, qui in eum scripserunt, respondendo compescuisse.

Poggio uses beast language in other ways. He describes Valla variously as a “stupid young ass, born to the pasture and to shame,” as “a beast grazing on the fields of stupidity,” and as a “beast driven by a fanatical spirit...[who] out of a lust for censuring slips where even boys are accustomed to stand firm.” *Oratio* I, 191. Quid ageret hic stultissimus asellus ad pastum & ignominiam natus...; Haec belua profecto agrum stulticiae depasta...; Sed haec belua fanatico spiritu ducta...pueri consistere solent. See note 117.

own work, he dared to criticize and correct it. Poggio returned again to the language of irrationality and animal undertones, describing Valla as fanatical and a “senseless hallucination” who “poured out his insanity against me” and as one who “despises, reproaches, and blames all ancient learned men with a certain wild [*fera*], immense impudence.”⁸⁰ According to Poggio, this was a constant problem. Despite Valla having been admonished many times by others, he continued to use scurrilous language. In criticizing Poggio, however, he had assailed—with *licentia maledicendi*—not one of the many deceased men of learning, but one alive, who could return like for like.⁸¹ Poggio used the language of either mad or beast-like irrationality and characterizations of scurrility to denigrate Valla, substantiate his provocation argument, and legitimate his own use of abusive language.

The invectives of Guarino and Poggio indicate how deeply concerned humanists were with demonstrating provocation.⁸² When demonstrated, provocation allowed an

⁸⁰ *Oratio* I, 188-189. Scripsi olim postquam redij ex Britannis, plures uarijs de rebus epistolas, quas postmodum multorum suasionem eas legere cupientium, in quoddam uolumen redegei, quod cum in manum leuissimi atque petulantissimi hominis Laurentij Vallae (quem ignominiae causa nomino) incidisset, multis in locis illas carpens, pro earum uitijs suam ignorantiam expressit, quae qualia sint paulo post discutiemus. Non miror hallucinatorem quendam fanaticum ac dementem in me insaniam suam euomuisse, qui propter innatam mentis imbecillitatem, propter infixam cordis uesaniem, propter insitam animi peruersitatem, omnes priscos illos doctissimos viros, quorum memoria omnibus seculis summa laudis celebratione uenerata est, fera quaedam immani proteruitate contemnit, reprehendit, culpat, aspernatur, tanquam fortunae rotam in manu tenens sursum deorsum uoluit & versat omnia, & ad suum arbitrium trahit.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 190. A multis admonitus, a multis reprehensus, a quibusdam etiam scriptis castigatus, tamen in sua scurrili dicacitate perseuerat. Facillime patiar hunc nostrum fanaticum oratorem in mortuos inuehere, qui respondere non possunt, cum non illorum, sed suam inscitiam & ignorantiam testetur, in eum uero qui uiuat, qui par pari queat referre, maledicendi licentiam sumere nequaquam aequo animo est ferendum.

⁸² The same concern is evident in Trebizond’s feuds. Andreas Agaso expressed shock that Trebizond had criticized Guarino’s encomium precisely because Trebizond “had not been harmed [*laccessitus*] by Guarino.” See Chapter Two, page 70. Trebizond responded by writing to Leonello d’Este that Guarino would never be able to prove that Trebizond had provoked him because his criticisms of Guarino’s style had been fair and consistent with scholarly practices. See Chapter Four, pages 195-197. During his feud with Poggio, Trebizond justified his letter to Nicholas V regarding the alleged assassination plot and his letter to his son Andreas detailing the forged-letter plot by framing them as responses to Poggio’s continued hostility. For his part, Poggio responded to the assassination charges by arguing he had never done

author to denigrate his opponent freely. When paired with claims of reluctance, as Guarino did, the effect was amplified and the author could claim the mantle of restraint. The concept of provocation also indicates that the authors of humanist invective could not simply deride their opponents, much less savage them, without good reason. The *topoi* of reluctance and provocation were necessary framing devices because humanist arguments depended on audience, the public arena in which honor was won or lost. The provocation defense, even if only uttered explicitly at the beginning of invectives, was also the foundation for subsequent accusations of irrational or immoderate behavior. It is evident, for example, in all the different kinds of categories of insults humanists wielded.

Categories of Insults

Humanist invectives tended to derive their accusations from a standard set of categories valued for their effectiveness in manipulating an audience's passions. These categories provided a structure for characterizations—or caricatures—of an opponent and indicate the rules associated with invective.⁸³ Renaissance scholarship has tended to deal with these categories in a cursory fashion.⁸⁴ David Rutherford, though, offers a useful overview, identifying a “standard” set of themes following the *De inventione* and the *Rhetorica ad Herennium*: external circumstances (*res externa*), physical attributes (*corpus*), and mental traits (*animus*). The themes encompass a host of more specific

anything to provoke Trebizond. For Trebizond's claims see Chapter Three, pages 118-124 and 139-146. For Poggio's response see Chapter Three, pages 125-129.

⁸³ Rho devoted a section of *Rhetorical Imitations* to words used in “vilifying,” and cited Cicero's speeches *In Verrem*, *In Catilinam*, and *In Antonium* as exemplars. “For those who have been provoked,” he explained, these categories also determined “the vocabulary of invectives” [*invectivarum vocabula*]. Rutherford, 19 and 300-313.

⁸⁴ Davies and Marsh acknowledge but do not discuss these categories in detail. Davies, 272 and Marsh, xi-xvi.

categories, including slurs about physical appearance (*corpus*), accusations of avarice, impudence, audacity, libido, and madness (*animus*), and jokes about birth, education—including “uncouth speech” [*oratio inepta*—and friendships (*res externa*).⁸⁵ The purpose of such attacks was to discredit the opposition, to make use of “everything that detracts from the defendant’s honour and repute, lessening his chance for a successful defense.”⁸⁶ The categories resulted in some of the most severe and salacious insults and can seem absurd or even shocking to modern readers. As aggressive as these insults could be, however, there were guidelines governing their use. Successful caricatures required choosing the appropriate category for the particular individual. Mere allegation was not enough.⁸⁷ If a scandalous offense was well known or strongly suspected, as was Filelfo’s relationships with his instructor’s wife and daughter, the individual in question drew specific criticisms regarding *libido* and *animus*.⁸⁸ As their provocation defenses suggest, Guarino and Poggio were both primarily concerned with indicating their respective opponents’s arrogance. Beyond the opening of their invectives, they do so primarily by means of classical *loci* related to the *animus*.

⁸⁵ Rutherford, 4-7. Ennio Rao identifies the *De compositione* of Gasparino Barzizza (1423) and Trebizond’s *Rhetoricorum libri quinque* (1433/4) as examples of humanist rhetorical manuals that follow this model. Rao, *Curmudgeons*, 110-111. Robin’s reassessment of Filelfo leads her to a consideration of the categories of sexual misconduct and avarice. Robin, “Reassessment,” 204-214. Poggio’s anecdote about Filelfo’s father is an example of an attacks against family (*res externa*). On the classical divisions, see *Rhet. Her.* 3.10-15 and Cic., *Inv. rhet.* 1.34-36, 2.177-78. In the secondary literature, see C.P. Craig’s list of the seventeen classical *loci* of invective favored by Greek and Roman speakers in “Audience Expectations, Invective, and Proof” and “Self-Restraint, Invective, and Credibility in Cicero’s ‘First Catilinarian Oration.’”

⁸⁶ Cic., *Inv. rhet.* 2.33.

⁸⁷ The *De inventione* counsels that “If you charge that the man whom you accuse acted from avarice and cannot prove that he is avaricious, you should show that other vices are not foreign to his nature...” Later, the treatise specifies that “praise and censure will be derived from the topics that are employed with respect to the attributes of persons.” Cic., *Inv. rhet.* 2.33 and 2.177.

⁸⁸ For Filelfo’s supposed sexual misconduct, see note 58. Similarly, Niccoli’s relationship with his housekeeper was popular gossip, so his opponents used it against him. See pages 263-265.

Boasts, Frauds, and False Glory

Guarino and Poggio attacked what they alleged to be the disparity between their opponents' boastfulness and arrogance and their actual abilities and moral conduct. They used a vocabulary of mental traits (arrogance, audacity, temerity) and external circumstances (primarily oratorical ineptitude) to cast their adversaries as frauds. The resulting portraits reinforced the initial provocation defense. Guarino frequently and explicitly accused Niccoli of boasting.⁸⁹ Niccoli, he explained, "wants to be believed the host of philosophy, of which nevertheless he is the most bitter adversary."⁹⁰ He is so concerned with public accolades that he rants "about any subject, however paltry, to give the common people the impression that he is saying something worthwhile."⁹¹ To convince others of his architectural expertise, Niccoli "commends ancient buildings, examines city walls, and diligently expounds at length about the ruins of fallen cities and half-demolished arches."⁹² He even knows the number of steps in ruined theaters, how many columns have fallen or remain standing, how many feet wide pedestals measure,

⁸⁹ See the frequent use of *glorior* and *iacto*. *IAP*, 142-145. ...et sicuti frumento Ceres, Chiron medicina simul et Phoebus, ita et hoc iste suo gloriatur invento...; *Ibid.*, 164-167. Nam cum erudire pueros per quandam inanem iactantiam concupiscit, rudem sese magis puerum patefacit...; *Ibid.*, 243. Gloriari saepius solet quod is, famae custos et ianitor...; *Ibid.*, 376-377. O inanem levitatem et iactantiam hominis singularem!

Likewise, Rutherford remarks how "Rho rarely chose between 'gloats' or 'brags,' preferring instead to wrote 'gloats and brags' (*gloriatur* et *iactat*)." *Philippic*, 109. Musas etenim Sicelidas, tametsi agrestes et impudicas, et Panormitam Apollinem quendam, Hermaphroditum imprimis uel ipsum suum, quod sibi honores olim amplissimos immortalemque sui nominis famam policeantur, deos suos esse gloriatur et iactat.

⁹⁰ *IAP*, 50-55. ...hospes philosophiae credi velit cuius tamen acerbissimus hostis est... See note 73.

⁹¹ *IAP*, 97-101. Meministi, ut arbitror, quanta cum adstantium derisione saepe ut aliquid vulgo dicere videatur, quavis de re et contempta quidem obiurgare nitatur.

⁹² *Ibid.*, 222-232. Quis sibi quominus risu dirumpatur abstineat, cum ille ut etiam de architectura rationes explicare credatur, lacertos exerens, antiqua probat aedificia, moenia recenset, iacentium ruinas urbium et 'semirutos' fornices, diligenter edisserit quot disiecta gradibus theatra, quot per areas columnae aut stratae iaceant aut stantes exurgant, quot pedibus basis pateat, quot obeliscorum vertex emineat. Quantis mortalium pectora tenebris obducuntur! His ipse placere et os populi meruisse se putat, quae ubique de eo iocularia festivitatemque pariunt.

and how many obelisks retain their tops. The many descriptions of the man's boasts, and particularly the last comment, speak to a consistent theme in Guarino's invective: foolishness, and his presentation of Niccoli as Fool.

Poggio also emphasized Valla's "boasting and verbal ostentation" but situated it in a narrative of Valla's madness and beast-like savagery instead of foolishness. He argued that the boasts of Valla, this insane beast [*insana belua*], were so considerable that it would lead people to think him "born an Apollo of Minerva and brought up in the care of the Sibyls and on the milk of the muses, as though a new wonder of the world." Later, Poggio described Valla as so swollen "that you would believe he is in labor with the earth."⁹³ Like Guarino's Niccoli, Poggio's Valla is arrogant, boastful, and savages learned authorities, despite the fact that he neither understands his subject matter nor the authorities whom he criticizes or cites. Poggio was critical of Valla's attacks on Boethius and Albert before accusing Valla of believing himself to be the only one who truly understood words and their meanings. To demonstrate Valla's ignorance, and to juxtapose it with Valla's alleged arrogance and boasting, Poggio cited Valla's misuse of

⁹³ *Oratio* I, 194. Denique nullus est aut fuit unquam quantumvis doctus & eloquens, in quem inuehere insana haec belua non praesumat, ut qui non nouerint hunc satyrum foeculentum, obstupescere cogantur ad tantam uerborum iactantiam atque obtentationem, & aliquem Appollineum foetum ex Mineruae partu in Sibyllarum gremio ac musarum lacte educatum, ueluti nouum orbis prodigium putent... Ipse certe ita tumet, ut terram parturire credas, ita se iactat, ac si maxima febri aestuaret, ita exultat, quasi ex Arabia nouum aduexerit foenicem. For the intervening text and Poggio's additional descriptions of Valla's boastfulness see note 167.

Poggio makes many such comments about Valla's boasts, some of which, like Guarino's, employ *glorior* and *iacto*. Cf. *Ibid.*, 189. Eorum autem qui nostra aetate fuere, praeclarissimos viros esse dicebat Leonardum Aretinum, Guarinus Veronensem, se tertium Italiae lumen, cum tamen primum locum mereret, nisi illis paulum humanitatis gratia cedere uellet. Sed quid mirum si duobus illis se praeferat. Cum se ipsum maioris esse doctrinae quam M. Varro fuerit palam praedicet, seque nulla in facultate illi cedere, quem Cicero & beatus Augustinus omnibus latinis praeferunt sapientia & doctrina; *Ibid.*, 193-194. Nam ut a leuioribus ordior: Priscianum, Donatum, Seruium, Pompeium Festum, Nonium Marcellum, Aulum Gellium, ipsum Marcum Varronem latinae linguae principem in grammaticis probro insectatur, & infinitis fere in rebus sua furibunda praesumptione innixus redarguit. Aristotelis, Boetij, Augustini, Hieronymi, Lactantij inscitiam fastidit. Ciceroni se praefert in elegantia. Salustij verba ut non latine posita immutat; *Ibid.*, 205. Gloriatur insulsa belua...respondendo compescuisse. See note 79.

Cicero. Valla “says *praeclarum* sometimes signifies *bonum*” and “brings forth as a witness Cicero, whom he does not at all understand.” Poggio then mocked Valla for misunderstanding Cicero’s use of irony and proceeded to number it among a host of things he argued ought to be condemned by learned men.⁹⁴ In the case of both Niccoli and Valla, their alleged *arrogantia*, considered a problem of the *animus*, provided the basis for the attacks against them.

Guarino and Poggio each claimed their opponent’s sense of self was so inflated that they considered themselves to be not just learned but the sole arbiters of learning. The accusation helped advance characterizations of foolishness and madness respectively. Niccoli appeared throughout as a man who interjected himself into scholarly matters to appear learned when in truth he was anything but. “Don’t you see,” Guarino asked, “how whatever unbecoming thing has been said or done wrongly by this monster of a man, he wants to seem proper and be approved and he longs for them to be received with applause like a thought of Plato’s?”⁹⁵ Worse, Niccoli “is accustomed often to boast because he, the custodian and doorkeeper of reputation, makes more or less famous those whom he wants.” In disputes of history or literature, “he will be the chosen arbiter, so that he may declare victors those whom he prefers.”⁹⁶ Guarino’s remark smacks of

⁹⁴ *Oratio* I, 201. Primo Boetium (quem Albertus philosophum Latinum appellat) tum ipsum Albertum redarguit homo accutissimi ingenij, qui plus somniando didicerit quam reliqui legendo, hic solum se uerborum conscius interpretem somniat, cum ipse in multis aberret. Verbum praeclarum, bonum quandoque significare dicit. Affert testem Ciceronem, quem minime intelligit. O praeclarum custodem ouium, lupum. Non claritas in custode ait, desideratur, sed probitas. Ergo praeclarum pro bono posuit. O praeclaram crassamque dementiam. Etiam pueris hoc patet, praeclarum per ironiam dictum, cum contra M. Antonium loqueretur, at id ignorantiae magister in laudem dictum putat. Infinita sunt praeterea quae damnanda essent a doctis uiris. Cf. Cic., *Phil.* 3.11.

⁹⁵ *IAP*, 71-76. Nonne vides ut, quicquid ab hoc hominis monstro indignum ac perperam dictum factumve sit, decere ac probari velit et ut Platonis sententiam plausu excipi cupiat?

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 243-250. Gloriari saepius solet quod is, famae custos et ianitor, quos velit pro personarum discrimine plus minusve nobilitat, sicuti copia nunc pleno nunc medio locupletare cornu traditur. Si quid

frustration, as Niccoli did have a great deal of influence in Florence, including the authority to hire individuals such as Guarino to teach. Guarino intended similarly colorful depictions of Niccoli's boasts to demonstrate the extent of the man's arrogance, as when he relates Niccoli to a "class of people:"

who although little different from the unlearned multitude, assume the false name of knowledge and authority, whereby that herd [*ista pecus*] is misled by such a degree of persuasion that they believe they say nothing except ideas fit for bronze and whatever they may have spit out is a rose."⁹⁷

Elsewhere, Guarino told his reader that if he wanted Niccoli to love him tell him to his face that he possessed "not just Attic, but all Greek and Latin eloquence; and he won't take it amiss if you add Hebrew as well."⁹⁸ Guarino also mocked how Niccoli "carefully weighs syllables...and carps at the letters—this one is distorted, that one uncultivated, yet another is plain, here is something superfluous, there is something omitted—forgetting that 'It is the habit not of eagles but of spiders to catch flies.'"⁹⁹ Each criticism was an example of Niccoli's foolish pretense but also an example of his arrogant belief that he was the arbiter of learning and learned men.

igitur de rebus cum gestis tum scriptis disceptabitur, is eligendus arbiter erit, ut quos ille maluerit more pastoris Alexandri victores declaret ac aureo donet malo.

⁹⁷ Ibid., 81-95. Quam periculosum igitur hoc hominum genus sit, vides; qui cum indoctae multitudini parum intersint, falsum scientiae et auctoritatis nomen induunt; per quam eo suasionis pecus ista deducitur ut non nisi dignas aere sententias eloqui se credat et rosa sit quaecunque expuisse contigerit, cum interim risus de se iocosque praebeat: laudatur coram lingua, iocatur a tergo...

⁹⁸ Ibid., 263-268. Vis te diligat, vis te amet? ei coram dicito non atticam modo sed graecam omnem latinamque inesse eloquentiam; nec moleste feret si hebraicam insuper addideris.

⁹⁹ Ibid., 102-108. Iste Ciceronis Amassanius, 'qui nulla arte adhibita vulgari sermone disputare solebat,' syllabas perpendit, quarum tamen tempora mensurasque simul ignorat, et quasi in provincia sua constitutus litteras carpit: haec intorta, crassa illa, gracilis alia, hic supervacua, illic omissa, immemor quod 'non aquilae sed araneorum mos est muscas aucupari.' Cf. Aristoph. Av. 1110. Guarino alludes to Cicero's *Academicus Primus*. See Terence J. Hunt, *A Textual History of Cicero's Academici Libri* (Boston: Brill, 1998), 32.

Agaso also likens Trebizond's criticisms of Guarino's style to a spider catching flies. *Collectanea*, 369. "Nam que illius carpente orationis ratio extitit in Franciscum Carmegnolam... quamquam inexpertus homo Trapezuntius minima carpat, araneas imitatus que muscis aucupandis inhiant."

Poggio censured Valla's claims of superiority by explaining them as a function of his opponent's faulty *animus*. "Because of an innate perversity of the soul," he wrote, Valla "despises, reproaches, and blames all ancient learned men with a certain wild, immense impudence just as if he, holding the wheel of fortune, turns and twists all upside down and drags them as he pleases."¹⁰⁰ Likewise, Poggio deemed Valla's claim that he will rescue Latin letters to be "fanatical boasting [*fanatica iactantia*]." "He [Valla] says that he is about to imitate Camillus, so that just as Camillus restored a city captured by the Gauls, so Valla himself will restore Latin letters, banished, refugee, and wandering, to the city."¹⁰¹ Poggio's descriptions of Valla's mad boasts included a number of increasingly vivid remarks. He likened Valla to a Delphic prophet, "devoid of every sense," and questioned the wisdom of responding to him. "Truly I am stupid," Poggio declared, "who judge his loquaciousness, his buffoonery, as anything of weight, [him] who is driven by a continual mental spin like a bacchant."¹⁰² In one of his more intentionally absurd passages, Poggio likened Valla and his "many and immoderate promises" to a "ridiculous man" who, drawing a crowd to himself at a particular date and time by promising to fly off a tower, keeps his crowd in suspense into the evening by

¹⁰⁰ *Oratio* I, 189. Non miror hallucinatorem...ad suum arbitrium trahit. Quoted in note 80.

¹⁰¹ *Oratio* I, 195. Dicit insuper se imitaturum esse Camillum, ut sicut ille urbem a Gallis captam restituit, ita ipse literas latinas exules, profugas, atque aberrantes urbi restituat. O caput insulsum. O cymbalum resonans sine sensu. Comprimat os insanum, & istam suam fanaticam iactantiam conterat.

Marcus Furius Camillus (446-365 B.C.), who defended Rome against the Gauls, received four triumphs. Later, Poggio declared a triumph for Valla in honor of his victory over all learned authorities. I discuss Valla's triumph in detail below, pages 275-278.

¹⁰² *Oratio* I, 193. Et certe effrenate nimium ac petulanter effertur Delphicus noster uates, tanquam illa sua sensa omni sensu uacua, ex Apollinis Pithij sacrario, non ex armentario uolitantis cerebelli, ac ex fanatici dementisque uesano capite promere uideatur. Cuius insaniae respondere ad singula quae sint inconcinniora prioribus stultissimum uideretur. Verum stultus ego, qui quicquam pensi faciam garrulitatem, scurrilitatemque eius, qui continua mentis uertigine agitur debacchantis ritu.

flailing his arms before simply baring his backside to the crowd.¹⁰³ Poggio extended the madness metaphor to the end of the invective. Here he decreed a triumph for Valla, a celebratory parade in the classical Roman tradition, “as though for the conqueror of all learned men,” just as “the Florentines are accustomed to do for madmen during their festivals.” He compared Valla to the kind of demented man who wanders through cities declaring himself to be an emperor or a pope. Like this madman, Valla thinks himself superior to all, and by virtue of his great wisdom, thinks others ought to favor him over the ancients.¹⁰⁴

Guarino and Poggio added to their caricatures of their opponents’ boasts a discussion of oratorical ineptitude, which classical oratory categorized as an example of *res externa*.¹⁰⁵ That Guarino expected the combination of arrogance and ineptitude to persuade his audience is made clear when he explicitly asks if his reader felt annoyed with Niccoli’s posturing. The question implies that everybody should be irked with men who, in the pursuit of glory, are boastful and attack others but lack the skill to defend

¹⁰³ Ibid., 195. Persimilis est Valla noster homini ridiculo, qui cum aliquando se ex quadam turri uolaturum certo die profiteretur, ac populus ad id spectaculum conuenisset homines suspensos uarijs alarum ostentationibus usque ad noctem detinuit. Deinde omnibus uolatum cupide expectantibus, populo culum ostendit. Ita Laurentius noster, post multas atque ingentes uerborum pollicitationes, post tantam expectationem promissorum, tandem non quidem culum ut ille, sed uolantis cerebri insaniam, uertiginem & pergrandem ignorantiae suppellectilem ostendit. For the preceding text, see note 101.

¹⁰⁴ *Oratio* I, 203. Sed ut homo leuis ex his fatuis qui uulgo per urbes discurrentes se Imperatores esse aut Pontifices asseuerant, sibi persuasit omni scientiarum facultate esse caeteris superiorem, tantamque sibi inesse sapientiam, ut omnibus priscis non solum sit comparandus, sed etiam anteposendus. Quod perinde in animo illius est infixum ac si id esset uerissimum. Et postea quoniam tanta aliorum est negligentia, ut hanc plenissimo cornu thesauri copiam absconsam non cognoscant, necesse est ut ipsemet suam insaniam ostentet, praedicet, & se grammaticorum, rhetorum, philosophorum, caeteraunque disciplinarum doctorem unicum praesentis seculi, & stultorum principem apertissime profiteat. Nil nunc restat, nisi ut quod sibimet persuasit, & alijs quoque persuadeat. Sed quoniam nonnullorum aemulatione maliuolorum atque inuidia factum est ut tanta uirtus sit multis ignota, nos ut ipsam palam omnibus faciamus, decernemus ei triumphum & lauream coronam, ne amplius addubitari possit Vallam nostrum stultorum atque insanorum principatum possidere. Itaque ut Florentini solent in festis suis aliquando curru triumphali insanos uehere, quod est iucundissimum spectaculum. Ita nos isti triumphum decernamus tanquam doctorum omnium uictori, ob omnes gentes ingenij acumine superatas.

¹⁰⁵ See the division between *animus*, *corpus*, and *res externa* discussed above, pages 219-221 and 248-250.

their braggadocio.¹⁰⁶ Guarino characterizes Niccoli's oratorical ineptitude in two ways, the first of which, prefaced with a comment about Niccoli's emotional immaturity, concerns his failures in Latin and Greek. He claims that irrational and emotional factors—madness, suspicion, gall, envy, and rash desire—instead of reason motivated Niccoli's treatment of him. One of the reasons for his dispute with Niccoli, Guarino continues, was Niccoli's jealousy of a fellow student who after a few short months of studying Greek under Guarino was on the verge of surpassing Niccoli, who had studied the language for fourteen years. Guarino attributes Niccoli's lack of progress to "his stupidity, his thick skull, and his natural ill-will," by virtue of which "he could get a taste of nothing but the shapes" of the Greek letters. Niccoli, according to Guarino, so resented the other pupil that he demanded Guarino expel the young man from his tutelage.¹⁰⁷ The story is an attack on Niccoli's manhood as Guarino implies that Niccoli lacks both the rational abilities for his studies and the emotional self-control to handle the competition with his fellow student in an adult and therefore manly way.¹⁰⁸

Guarino offers a number of other anecdotes to amplify his presentation of Niccoli's failures in Latin and Greek and therefore his oratorical ineptitude. For example, he accuses Niccoli of knowing nothing about the books he collects, of being unable to comment on them without first checking the inscription— a situation Guarino claims

¹⁰⁶ *IAP*, 50-55. See note 73.

¹⁰⁷ *IAP*, 274-297. Sui tam rabiosi clamoris in me causas fortasse dudum intentus expectas et rationem quaeris? Quid in hoc Horestae ratione opus est? est pro ratione furor, suspicio, bilis, livor, et inconsulta voluntas, violenta atque tyrannica. Nam cum in condiscipulatu quendam sui certe amantissimum paucis adeo mensibus proficere cerneret, ut non dubium esset quin ipse, qui iam anno quarto decimo huic litterarum generi operam dare coepisset, superaretur, immo vero propter ingenii crassitudinem, pingue cerebrum et innatam malivolentiam nihil praeter characteres gustare posset, veteri stimulatus invidia ut ille continuo reiceretur imperiosus edixit, minas insuper et ingenuitatem addens magniloquentiam... On Niccoli's demand that Guarino expel the other man see Davies, 272 and Rao, *Curmudgeons*, 32-33.

¹⁰⁸ For a discussion of reason, the emotions, and manhood see Chapter Four, pages 156-164 and 186-187.

happens often—and even then being unable to say anything meaningful about them. Audience plays an important role in these stories. Guarino maintains that Niccoli’s failures are well-known—the stuff of gossip and ridicule—but also that they occur in public settings. He explains, for instance, how, “in a meeting of learned men,” when Niccoli had read aloud a large page of a Latin codex, he was asked about the meaning of the text. Niccoli betrayed his own ignorance by responding that he thought he had read Greek.¹⁰⁹ It is, of course, difficult to believe that any humanist of repute would make such a mistake. The story is intended as a humorous example of a basic fact: Niccoli is not as learned as he wants others to think he is. Even Niccoli’s physical appearance gives him away, according to Guarino, who mocks the size of his ears as a sign of Niccoli’s loquacity and stupidity.¹¹⁰

Guarino’s second means of characterizing the oratorical ineptitude of “Niccoli the Fool” is by mocking Niccoli’s interest in a variety of studies Guarino casts as largely

¹⁰⁹ *IAP*, 376-405. O inanem levitatem et iactantiam hominis singularem! ornamentum vendicat quod eius incitiam magis magisque detegat. Nam dum hos in manu codices contrectat, si quis illum interea conspicatus id enim saepius obvenit quisnam unus aut alter sit percontetur, iste non nisi inspecto prius epigrammate respondebit nec tuto satis; tum si rogetur, ut unum locum et mox alterum exponat, obmutescet certo scio aut rubore suffusus ignorare se fatebitur quos tantopere perquisierit. Cuius rei nec longe exempla petantur. Nam cum in coetu doctorum aliquando virorum latini codicis grandem sane paginam accurata pronuntiatione perlegeret eiusque lectionis sententiam dicere rogaretur, suam in utraque re ignorationem incaute detexit. Dum enim excusationes imprudens quaeritat, se graece lectitasse videri respondit: quam paucis vera prodere immemor ipse coactus. Nam quid ab eo aliud expressum est, quam latine scire nihil et graece tantundem? For the preceding text, see note 127.

¹¹⁰ *IAP*, 233-242. Profecto si huius hominis effigiem accuratius intueare, tantam in eo levitatem imprudentiamque mirari desines: aspice in eo auricularum magnitudinem, quae, nisi gravissimo testi et verissimo auctori Trogo fidem deroges, loquacitatis et stultitiae est nota, sicut Plinius refert. Cf. Plin., *HN* 9.276.

The insult is the only example of Guarino drawing from the *corpus* category. See pages 248-250. Big ears feature repeatedly in Rho’s invective against Panormita. *Philippic*, 85. For the Bible says that Balaam’s ass spoke and that the ass articulated almost in a human voice words that it did not understand. So our ass here (My! What ears he has!) quoted words to me that he could not understand...; *Philippic*, 88. Does he tremble and shudder? ‘Did his hair stand up or his voice stick in his throat?’ He certainly absorbs the words since his ears have not yet shrunk...

inconsequential.¹¹¹ As the title *In auripellem poetam* indicates, Guarino distinguishes between real scholars and “false poets” like Niccoli.¹¹² “When little goats cannot taste the kernel” of true learning, he explains, “they nibble at the shell.”¹¹³ Instead of being skilled in Latin and Greek, Guarino jokes that Niccoli might better be called a “geometer...since the duty of his art consists in points and lines and surfaces.”¹¹⁴ Niccoli sets aside the other parts of books as superfluous and “claims as his the skill and acumen in placing prickings in books.”¹¹⁵ Guarino remarks “how precisely and copiously and elegantly [Niccoli] argues about lines...when he demonstrates how they should be drawn with great sharpness, not with a lead instrument but an iron one.” He adds that the fruit of Niccoli’s life has been a consideration of “the shapes of letters, the colors of paper, and

¹¹¹ Guarino was not alone in doing so. Just as Filelfo’s personal life drew charges of sexual misconduct, so did Niccoli’s interests draw criticisms of superficiality. As Anthony Grafton explains, several of those who wrote against Niccoli described him as “someone who cared only for the commercial, not the aesthetic or intellectual, value of his library....” Grafton, 39-40.

¹¹² On the title, see page 234.

¹¹³ *IAP*, 108-112. Quapropter Caesarem Augustum doctissimum in primis virum non usque adeo orthographiam idest formulam rationemque scribendi a grammaticis institutam observasse constat. Capellae cum medullas gustare nequeant, cortices obrodunt. For the preceding text, see note 99.

¹¹⁴ *IAP*, 122-157. Summum ego hunc geometram vocitare nihil expavesco; nam cum eius artis officium circa puncta lineas superficies ceteraque id genus versetur, nulli magis quam isti festivissimo vel fistulissimo in primis viro eam adiudicari disciplinam posse contenderim, qui omissis reliquis librorum partibus ut supervacuis, in constituendis codicis punctis solertiam et acumen suo iuri vindicat. De lineis vero quam accurate quam copiose quam eleganter disputet, operae pretium est, quasi Diodorum aut Ptolomaeum, audire cum eas acutissime non plumbeo stilo sed ferreo potius deducendas esse demonstrat; et sicuti frumento Ceres, Chiron medicina simul et Phoebus, ita et hoc iste suo gloriatur invento. Circa chartas idest superficies non parum sua valet sapientitudo in hisque laudandis aut improbandis suam ostendat eloquentiam. O consumptam per tot annos inaniter aetatem, cuius is denique decerptus est fructus, ut de litterarum formis, chartarum coloribus, atramentorum varietate disputandum sit. Hoc vere Horatianum illud est: ‘parturient montes, nascetur ridiculus mus.’

¹¹⁵ Given the other references in the passage to the construction of manuscripts, I translate the phrase “...in constituendis codicis punctis solertiam...” as “the skill in placing prickings in books.” I take *puncta* to refer to the small holes or prickings made in pages to guide copyists in the ruling of manuscripts. For an explanation of pricking and ruling see Barbara A. Shailor, *The Medieval Book* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1991), 12-13. Alternatively, *puncta* may refer to punctuation. Ian Thomson translates the line as “the skill...to determine punctuation marks in a manuscript. Thomson, 632. Interpreting *puncta* as punctuation fits well with Niccoli’s interests in orthography, which Guarino criticizes elsewhere. See page 271. For Niccoli’s role in Quattrocento orthography see Grendler, *Schooling*, 169 and 324-325.

the different kinds of ink.” Clearly, Guarino does not consider these activities marks of true scholarship. Nor does he consider Niccoli’s book-hunting and the construction of his library as evidence of true learning. He diagnoses Niccoli’s “anxiety of book collecting” as a symptom of the man’s “despair that they [the books] will ever be a help to him” given his “unteachable mind,” and of his belief that posterity will consider him knowledgeable for having built his library.¹¹⁶ These are some of the most belittling passages in the invective, but they are hardly gratuitous. Guarino uses criticisms of education and aptitude, described in the *Rhetorica ad Herennium* under the category of *res externa*, to rouse his audience against his opponent.

For Poggio, drawing upon the classical *locus* of oratorical ineptitude was less an issue of mockery and more the construction of an exhaustive list of Valla’s alleged errors. Poggio composed his oration in the belief that Valla had emended his work, so he spent a great deal of time responding to a host of technical issues. In a characteristic passage, Poggio defended his use of *ex Britannis* instead of Valla’s suggested *ex Britannia* and his use of *affectio* and *destinatum* and countered Valla’s claim that he ought to have used *apud* instead of *coram*. Like any good humanist, Poggio appealed to Cicero, Livy, Virgil, and others to defend his style.¹¹⁷ Elsewhere, Poggio distinguished between true orators

¹¹⁶ *IAP*, 440-450. Scio equidem, scio quorsum haec aggregandorum sollicitudo codicum et libraria, ut ita dicam, consilia evadant; nam cum eos per animi indocilitatem adiumento sibi futuros desperaret, magnificum quiddam confecisse cogitat si bibliothecam instruxerit, quam intuentes posterius ei opinionem scientiae conservent.

¹¹⁷ *Oratio* I, 191. Arguit insuper cum scripsissem me ex Britannis redijsse, ex Britannia oportuisse dici. At tritum est ab Indis, Hispanis, Aphris, Germanis dici nos esse reuersos. Affectionis nomen a me scriptum culpat, & ait id uerbum in Tullio minime reperiri. Quid ageret hic stultissimus asellus ad pastum & ignominiam natus, si Tullij opera non extarent. Hic aperte stuporem cordis ostendit, & parum se habere commertij cum scriptis Ciceronis, cum uerbum ab eo totiens usitatum ignoret. Nam cum in manibus essent libri ad Herennium, inter legendum in quarto animaduerti libro posita esse uerba haec: Ad demonstrandum quaeuis sit eius affectionis qua impulsus aliquid reus commisisse dicitur. Pauloque post: Ipsa diligenter natura eius affectionis quam leuissimae &c. Et deinde: Nam affectionis quidem ratio, & reliqua. Sed multis quoque in locis eo uerbo Cicero utitur, quae satietatis causa omisi. Coram pontifice, cum scripsissem

and “wranglers” or “bawlers,” language suggestive of Quintilian’s distinction between the orator as a *vir bonus* and morally bankrupt, loquacious figures such as the *latrator* or *rabula*.¹¹⁸ In criticizing Valla’s suggestion that he ought to have used *existimo* instead of *aestimo*, Poggio described Valla as a “teacher heavy with the loquacity of ignorance” and likened him to a “tiresome, stupid, and contentious” grammarian who obstinately clings to his interpretations. Valla, “this ridiculous barker [*latrator ridiculus*],” Poggio continued, also criticized his use of *pridie* instead of *postridie*. “The impudence of this wrangler [*rabula*] is completely insane,” he added, labeling Valla “a quack [*circulator*] who teaches boys” and, again, an “insolent beast.”¹¹⁹ Poggio spared little in the way of abusive epithets focused on his opponent’s oratorical ineptitude, which, of course, defended his own competence against Valla’s emendations. Like Guarino, he used these

soloecismum esse ait, & apud scribi debuisse. Haec belua profecto agrum stulticiae depasta, nihil intelligit in latinis quid differant coram & apud. Legat Liuium qui ait, magis apud quos quam coram quibus loqueretur. Et si mentis imbecillitas patitur, confideret quid haec distent inter se uerba. Coram quem quaeritis adsum Vergilius ait: Sed haec belua fanatico spiritu ducta, cui sola detrahendi facultas est nota, impetu quodam uesano fertur in praeceptis, & prae libidine detrahendi labitur, ubi etiam pueri consistere solent. Qui ad te destinatum legerent, scripsi. Id culpae censor noster Valla, in stulticia ac coecitate Vallae uersatus, & non inueniri destinatum ait promissum. Neque uero ego missum intelligi uolui, sed quemadmodum Virgilius destinatus arae, inquit, a quo & destinatus descendit, ut decretum, addictum, adiudicatum uolui significari.

¹¹⁸ Quint., *Inst.*, 12.9.12. In a passage identifying self-restraint as that which “gives weight and credit to his [an orator’s] words,” Quintilian warns against the dangers if an individual “debased himself from an honest man [*vir bonus*] into a snarling wrangler [*rabula latrator*].” All subsequent translations of Quintilian are Russell’s. Quintilian, *The Orator’s Education*, ed. and trans. Donald A. Russell (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001). The distinction is far more common in Poggio’s invective but is not entirely absent in Guarino’s. See *IAP*, 205-210. Quanquam quid de huius mirandum est latratibus, cui singula passim mordere propositum perstat... Quoted in note 76.

¹¹⁹ *Oratio* I, 192-193. Vbi aestimaui, ille existimaui. Multaque praeterea inepta garrulitate grauis ignorantiae praeceptor culpatur, & tanquam grammatici molesti, insulsi, & contentiosi solent in uerborum interpretationibus haerere. Illud uero absurdum, cum uisitassem pridie abbatem, cuiusdam epistolae principium fecissem, ille latrator ridiculus postridie fuisse dicendum scripsit, qua in re magnam inscitiam prae se fert omni pudore uacua. Etenim pridie, cum tempus praeteritum significet, hoc est qui proxime praecessit diem, postridie uero futurum, quomodo conuenisse aliquem poteram die qui esset futurus. Perinde ac si dicas, cum te cras conuenissem. Insana profecto huius rabulae impudentia est, qui libidine detrahendi tanquam uentris crepitus inconsulto nimium uerba effert. Scripsi, urbis omnium celeberrimae. At ille circulator disseminare uerba inter pueros solitus, ciuitatis ascripsit, tanquam male a me esset positum urbis nomen. Sed quam lata euagatur peruicacis hominis stulticia. Quis crederet hanc insolentem bestiam in tanta rerum ignorantia uersari.

insults to amplify his caricature of Valla's arrogance: not only was Valla a vile slanderer of learned men, he was an inept fraud as well.

Cruelty, Avarice, and Sexual Misconduct

In addition to charges of arrogance and ineptitude, Guarino, whose attacks were more varied than Poggio's, amplified his caricature of Niccoli with charges of avarice and cruelty, additional flaws of the *animus*. Such was the case in his claim regarding Niccoli's treatment of his fellow student—who Guarino carefully noted “was certainly very fond of Niccoli”—and his demand that Guarino expel the man from his tutelage.¹²⁰ The tale indicates Niccoli's ineptitude but also his jealousy and cruelty, particularly toward someone who had given him no reason for either. In an example of *praeteritio*, Guarino elsewhere claimed he would “omit his [Niccoli's] duty to his family, and his friendship and affection to all.”¹²¹ “He loves friends as he loves fish,” Guarino clarified, “which unless they are fresh he immediately spurns and attacks with insults.” Guarino maintained that Niccoli's cruelty was common knowledge and that there were “innumerable letters...in which he inveighs” against his older and closer friends and “brands their lives and morals with marks of the deepest shame.”¹²² The charge is interesting since contemporary scholarship regards Niccoli as remaining silent in response to the invectives written against him. True or not, it was the charge itself that

¹²⁰ *IAP*, 274-297. For Guarino's story, see pages 255-256 and note 107.

¹²¹ *Praeteritio* is the rhetorical device of passing over certain information “through a feigned sense of modesty or propriety.” Corbeill, *Controlling Laughter*, 93. See *Rhet. Her.* 4.37 and Quint. *Inst.* 9.2.75.

¹²² *IAP*, 192-204. *Omitto pietatem in suos, amicitiam et caritatem in universos. Ei profecto delicatus est sensus; amicos ut pisces amat, quos e vestigio nisi recentes aspernatur et convitiis insultat. Et ut me ipsum facilius consoler, innumerabiles visuntur vulgo litterae suo more dictatae, quasi quaedam 'farrago loquendi,' quibus eos quos maiori caritate et antiquiore consuetudine complectitur probris insectatur, moribus ac vitae turpissimas inurit maculas.* For the surrounding text, see notes 75 and 76.

mattered. Classical oratory allowed for fabrication to amplify a characterization, as long as it could not be disproven easily.¹²³

Guarino often derived his examples of Niccoli's cruelty and avarice, of course, from Niccoli's alleged treatment of Guarino himself. In the first draft of the invective, Guarino accused Niccoli of avarice [*avaritia*], charged him with "cheating and robbing me," and claimed that Niccoli never paid him for his services as an instructor.¹²⁴ This was not the only allegation of avarice he made. Guarino later recalled how Niccoli "turned greedy [*cupidus*] eyes on several of my manuscripts" and demanded they be turned over to him.¹²⁵ Worse, Niccoli did not "hesitate to call me his slave in crowded gatherings of the noblest citizens."¹²⁶ The audience added a layer of humiliation to the story, as it made Niccoli's abuse, wrong in and of itself, a public affair. Guarino then linked Niccoli's avarice and cruelty to his ineptitude. He explained that his opponent did not demand his books because "he expected they would be of any use or assistance to

¹²³ See for instance the discussion of Crassus's speech against Memmius. Cic., *De or.* 2.239-241. For a warning regarding the use of fabrication in support of *narratio*, see *Rhet. Her.* 1.16. As for whether the claim could be disproven, Niccoli had enough enemies among Florentine humanists who, like Guarino, wrote about his cruelty. See Bruni's invective, notes 66 and 129. Niccoli's reputation for cruelty, fair or not, was widely enough alleged that it provided a reliable means to attack his manner and character. Davies, 270.

¹²⁴ *IAP*, 344-357. Et ut nihil officii et humanitatis relinqueret inexpertum, me contra ius et fas omni pacta mercede spoliatur. Quantum in eo possit avaritia vel hinc cognosci licet, quod me calcato fidei et aequitatis numine fraudat expilat ac populatur; extat conventorum et datae inter nos dexterarum chirographum gravissimi et doctissimi et certe humanissimi cuiuspiam manu communi consensu et voluntate perscriptum.

The passage was omitted from the later draft of the letter. Thomson speculates this was because the accusation had lost its point, as Guarino no longer taught under Niccoli's auspices. Thomson, 644-645.

¹²⁵ Charges of avarice were not uncommon. Robin notes the many such charges against Francesco Filelfo by Traversari and Poggio. Robin, "Reassessment," 204-212. Trebizond faced similar charges from Poggio and Giovanni Aurispa. In February 1453, Poggio wrote that he had considered Trebizond a friend until the Cretan stole from the common monies in the curia. See Chapter Three, note 55. Likewise, in June 1454 Trebizond wrote to his son Andreas that he thought Aurispa's part in the forged-letter plot was a result of the man's anger with him for having accepted fees in the curia in his place. *Collectanea*, 120; Monfasani, *George of Trebizond*, 123 and 126.

¹²⁶ *IAP*, 303-307. Inde cum nonnullis codicibus meis cupidos adiecisset oculos, eos a me sibi tradi depoposcerat, peculiolum meum suo fisco patronatus iure repetens; nec enim dubitavit modestissimus homo in frequenti nobilissimorum civium conventu me suum vocitare mancipium.

him”—he argued Niccoli lacked the ability to understand them—but because “he wanted them to adorn his library.” The recollection led Guarino to lament again—“O the inane superficiality [*levitas*] and singular boasting [*iactantia*] of the man!”—the disparity between his opponent’s boasts and his aptitude.¹²⁷

Guarino added to his list of classical *loci* a consideration of Niccoli’s relationship with his “housekeeper,” characterized as a *muliercula*, a comment on his opponent’s *libido* intended to demonstrate sexual misconduct. The story was a digression—Guarino later steered the conversation back to Niccoli’s theft of his manuscripts “from whence it had slipped”—following classical models designed to amplify a narrative.¹²⁸ Stories of sexual misconduct were common in humanist invective.¹²⁹ For Guarino, the story was another anecdote that was “common knowledge and gossiped about on every street with laughter, ridicule, and scorn.” Here again, the audience was in on the joke with Guarino. The premise of the story was that while Niccoli demanded Guarino’s books and treated

¹²⁷ Ibid., 363-379. Nec illum a me codices idcirco repetisse credas, quod eos ulli sibi futuros usui aut adiumento speraverit, cum ad illos velut 'asinus ad lyram' existat futurusve sit et sicut in proverbio est 'oleum perdat et impensas,' nisi partae forsitan disciplinae non quinquennale quemadmodum Pythagorei sed sempiternum agit silentium. Ceterum eos ad suae ornamentum bibliothecae vel ut melius loquar tabernae librariae concupierat. O inanem levitatem et iactantiam hominis singularem! ornamentum vindicat quod eius inscitiam magis magisque detegat. See note 109 for the following text.

¹²⁸ For digression as a means of attack see Cic., *Inv. rhet.* 1.27 and 1.97. The *De oratore* counts digression as a means of moving the audience. Cic., *De or.* 2.311. Quint., *Inst.* 4.3.1-17. For digressions in ancient rhetorical theory see Peter S. Perry, *The Rhetoric of Digressions* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2009), 112-146 and H.V. Canter, “Digressio in the Orations of Cicero,” *The American Journal of Philology* 52, no.4 (1931): 351-361.

¹²⁹ Lorenzo Benvenuti and Leonardo Bruni both told the story of the housekeeper in their invectives against Niccoli, another indication of how certain figures drew particular kinds of insults. See Davies, 283-284. Charges of sexual misconduct were frequently made against Francesco Filelfo. See pages 238-239 and Robin, “Reassessment,” 212-214. Charges of sexual misconduct abound in Antonio da Rho’s *Philippic*, particularly related to Panormita’s same-sex relationships and because of the content of Panormita’s *The Hermaphrodite*. First circulated in Bologna in 1425/6, *The Hermaphrodite* features a variety of topics some humanists perceived as vulgar, the most controversial of which was sodomy. See especially the useful introduction by Holt Parker to Antonio Beccadelli, *The Hermaphrodite*. See *Philippic*, 89 and 92 where Rho speaks about or alludes to Panormita’s male lover. See *Philippic*, 133 and 189 where Rho puns on Beccadelli with “Lecherelli” and Panormita with “Gomoritta” to cast Panormita as a lecher and accuse him of sodomy.

him like a slave, Niccoli was the real slave. He was the slave not only of a number of base moral practices but also “of the most depraved maidservant and most sordid little slut whose command he follows and zealously carries out in such a way that nothing influences him more than the lust and judgment of this very stupid woman.”¹³⁰ The anecdote was an attack on the manhood of one who was utterly dominated by his mistress. “She shouts,” Guarino elaborated, “and he has to be quiet; she demands...and the demand has to be met; she hates any friends or family he has, and they have to be thrown out.” Guarino stacked *loci* one atop another, arguing that Niccoli’s *libido* and the influence of his *muliercula* led him to treat his friends cruelly.¹³¹ The relationship also led Niccoli to mishandle his property, another example of *res externa*, insofar as he had let his *muliercula* take over his affairs. Niccoli “has been reduced to such a state of madness,” Guarino continued, that “rumor has it she has been made heiress to a large part

¹³⁰ *IAP*, 308-343. Nec vero mirandum est ut me liberum ignoret qui se mancipium esse nesciat non dico libidinum, ventris, iracundiae, inanis gloriae, arrogantiae, invidiae ceterarumque animi turpitudinum, quibus infinitis paret servit obsequitur; sed nequissimae ancillae et sordissimae mulierculae, cuius imperia ita exequitur navatque, ut nihil apud eum magis valeat, quam huius stultissimae mulieris libido atque iudicium. Non ancillam, sed dominam diceret; clamat illa: taceat hic oportet; poscit, immo ultro corripit: assentiendum est; amicos et familiares si quos habet odit, eiciundi sunt. Nota renarro, quae in tota sunt vicinia cum risu ioco et contemptione fabulamenta. Quid plura? eo redactus est insaniae, ut magna ex parte bonorum institutam heredem rumor sit; quae si marem forte pepererit infantem, ei tota speranda possessio. Tales ego non servos sed nequissimos servos iudico. Sed revocetur unde dilapsa erat oratio. In his autem rebus cum eius imperio minime paruissem, quae turbas, quae convitia, iurgia, probra! Nosti hominem; nihil illum ab se degenerasse diceret. For the preceeding text, see note 126.

On the sexual connotation to *muliercula*, see Cic., *Catil.* 2.10.23. Cicero discusses Catiline’s “bodyguard of prostitutes.” Ian Thomson translates Guarino’s phrase as “filthy little slut.” Thomson, 638.

¹³¹ Bruni also blames the *muliercula* as the source of Niccoli’s madness and the reason why, Bruni alleges, Niccoli had “savaged [him] with snarling teeth.” Bruni to Poggio, 1423, in *Leonardi Bruni Arretini Epistolarum Libri VIII*, ed. Mehus, 5:19. Si causam quaeris, Poggi, & initium hujusce mali, respondebo cum Ennio: *Utinam ne in nemore Pelio securibus caesa cecidisset in terram abiegnatrabes*, & reliqua, quae sequuntur. Una siquidem muliercula, Poggi, una inquam muliercula, & ea ipsa turpissima causa est illius amentiae, de qua dicam breviter; Ibid., 5:21. Denique ut Circe illa hospites suos diversas in figuras convertisse dicitur, & alios leones, alios sues fecisse; sic ista venifica in hospitium, atque adeo in thorum Nicolai recepta filtris, & veneficiis hominem exuit, ac belluinam feritatem, amentiamque induit...Ego unus supereram: me quoque ferino dente lacerandum putavit. Coepit enim jampridem sic adversari michi, ut palam prae se ferret pati non posse, celatim carpere, detrahare, insectari denique, & succensere, contentiones avidius captare, lites ultro exposcere, ut manifeste appareret non esse illum, qui prius fuerat, sed in truculentam aliquam bestiam esse conversum.

of his estate.” The story reads like tabloid gossip but Guarino used it, stacking classical *loci* atop one another, to amplify his portrait of Niccoli as a fool and an abuser of friends.¹³²

Humanist invective was often wide-ranging in its ample use of classical categories and denigrating language, but it could also be humorous. Early modern readers would certainly have considered some of the passages examined thus far to be humorous. Guarino’s depiction of Niccoli as a big-eared, loquacious fool rambling on about architecture, diphthongs, and types of paper, and Poggio’s description of Valla as a wild-eyed, Bacchic beast as demented as the man who believes himself an emperor or a pope were intended to draw a laugh. Humor, though, was an important structural component to invective, complete with its own guidelines and worthy of its own discussion.

Wit and Mockery

Humor, aside from its specific use in invective, was an important part of the humanist experience in general. Humanists took pride in being considered *faceti* and actively cultivated a reputation as wits. Guarino’s correspondence illustrates how his peers praised him for his wit. Whether that praise was sincere or mere flattery, it indicates the importance of humor to humanists.¹³³ Gasparino Barzizza wrote to Guarino in December 1415 while compiling a book of examples of rhetorical usage modeled on Cicero. He acknowledged the persuasiveness of jokes but did not consider himself capable of addressing the material in his advice to future orators. He deferred to Guarino,

¹³² For the mishandling of property, see Cic., *Inv. rhet.* 1.35 and *Rhet. Her.* 3.14. Antonio da Rho used the trope as well. *Philippic*, 132. “Are we really envious that on the heels of becoming an heir he became a prodigal, indeed a squanderer and devourer of his own patrimony? that he has frittered away, destroyed, and consumed amid sodomites and whores the very substantial dowry of his wife, a most chaste Penelope?”

¹³³ See Thomson’s chapter “Guarino and Humour.” Thomson, 410-428.

whom he called a *facetissimus homo*.¹³⁴ Francesco Barbaro likewise praised for Guarino's wit when he requested examples, in prose or poetry, of his humorous writings.¹³⁵ Poggio made his interest in humor clear in the title of the *Facetiae*. In his introduction, he defended the levity of the book by noting, like classical authors, the importance of refreshing the spirit through humorous tales and fables.¹³⁶ Both he and Guarino congratulated Panormita for his collection of entertaining tales, *The Hermaphrodite*, though each tempered his praise so as not to appear to condone some of the more scandalous stories.¹³⁷ Even tempered, their praise reflects their appreciation for the humorous.

Humanists, valuing humor in general, followed classical models that recognized the utility of humor in persuading an audience. Wit had clear appeal to the Roman advocate, and so humor received ample attention in a number of classical rhetorical

¹³⁴ Gasparino Barzizza to Guarino of Verona, 19 December 1415, in *Epistolario*, ed. Sabbadini, 100-101. Non curavi autem ut pars ea exemplorum ad te mitteretur que ad id genus attinet quo animi iudicium lassi audiendo lusu aliquo aut alia ratione recreantur; magis enim in gestu quodam quam in verbis ea ratio est posita et ego ita ineptus ad facetias sum ut cum ad cetera tardo sim ingenio, in hac re nullo prorsus existam. Prudenter ergo cavi mihi ne hanc unam particulam ad te hominem facetissimum mitterem, ne dum futurum oratorem de risu excitando admonere studeo, ipse magis irridendus videar.

¹³⁵ Guarino of Verona to Francesco Barbaro, 12 June 1408, in *Epistolario*, ed. Sabbadini, 11. Demum instanter oras ut meas, 'he he he ha ha' ridiculum! epistulas vel metro vel soluto sermone contextas tibi destinem, quibus delectaberis plurimum...Tu quoque, mi Francisce, cave ne dum aliqua mei duceris existimatione, quam tu tibi fingis, frustratus redeas. Quid me aridum imploras pro fonte rivulum? Ego si qua olim condiderim, ut rudiusculum quandoque exerceam ingenium, non repono...Desine igitur et dignas latebris nugas ne sub lucem retrahe.

¹³⁶ Bracciolini, *Facetiae*, 1:1-6. Poggio argues that though "there will be many, I presume, inclined to find fault with these tales of ours, either as being frivolous [*leves*] or unworthy of a serious man [*viro gravi indigna*]" nonetheless "it is proper, and almost a matter of necessity commended by philosophers, that our mind, weighed down by a variety of cares and anxieties, should now and then enjoy relaxation from constant labour, and be incited to cheerfulness and mirth by some humorous recreation."

Panormita likewise claimed to follow "the example of the learned poets of old, who, it is clear, composed trifles," and exhorted Cosimo da' Medici to read them when he had a break "from your care and concern for the senate of our country." Antonio Beccedelli, *The Hermaphrodite*, ed. Parker, 7.

¹³⁷ Rutherford, 27.

works.¹³⁸ The *De oratore* described the use of “a certain humour, flashes of wit, the culture befitting a gentleman, and readiness and terseness alike in repelling and in delivering the attack.” “Jesting too and shafts of wit [*facetiae*],” the *De oratore* explained, “are agreeable and often highly effective.” Reasons for this were offered:

It clearly becomes an orator to raise laughter, and this on various grounds; for instance, merriment naturally wins goodwill for its author; and everyone admires acuteness, which is often concentrated in a single word, uttered generally in repelling, though sometimes in delivering an attack; and it shatters or obstructs or makes light of an opponent, or alarms or repulses him; and it shows the orator himself to be a man of finish, accomplishment and taste...[and] dispels suggestions not easily weakened by reasonings.¹³⁹

Humor could make an orator appear charming and agreeable and win him goodwill while weakening goodwill toward an opponent. Cicero listed wit as an important attribute in his history of famous orators, the *Brutus*.¹⁴⁰ Later authors echoed these ideas. Quintilian praised Cicero’s “remarkable quality of urbanity,” which he used in court to produce “more witty remarks than anybody,” and wrote that humor “possesses perhaps the most commanding and irresistible force of all...[and] often turns the scale in very important matters.”¹⁴¹

Roman authors advocated the use of humor but also acknowledged its dangers and outlined guidelines for its use. The *De oratore* identified two kinds of humor, wit [*facetia*] and “raillery” [*dicacitas*], the latter more caustic. The combination of both was

¹³⁸ For the classical use of humor in invective see especially Corbeill, *Controlling Laughter*, 5; Richlin, 96-104; Krostenko, 202-232. See also Francis W. Kelsey, “Cicero as Wit,” *The Classical Journal* 3, no.1 (Nov. 1907): 3-10; Mary A. Grant, *The Ancient Rhetorical Theories of the Laughable: The Greek Rhetoricians and Cicero* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1924); Barbara C. Bowen, “Ciceronian Wit and Renaissance Rhetoric,” *Rhetorica* 16, no.4 (Autumn 1998): 409-429.

¹³⁹ Cic., *De or.* 1.17-18 and 2.236. Humor is the point of a long discussion. Cic., *De or.* 2.216-291. See also *Rhet. Her.* 1.10. The role of humor in oratory was not a Roman invention. Cf. Arist., *Rh.* 3.1419b.

¹⁴⁰ See Cicero’s discussion of P. Scipio, L. Crassus, Scaevola, and L. Philippus. Cic., *Brut.* 128, 143, 164, 173.

¹⁴¹ Quint., *Inst.* 6.3.4, 9-10.

to be reserved for those whom the orator “detests and deems deserving of invective [*contumelia*].” Comparatively severe uses of humor were to be limited to particular situations, which left orators in a tricky position.¹⁴² Humor would only succeed if it appealed to the audience’s emotions. It would fail if the audience considered the speaker repugnant. Quintilian addressed these problems, noting the difficulties in assessing the causes of laughter. Jokes are judged, he explained, “not on rational principles, but by a feeling which cannot be put into words.” “Totally foreign” to the personality of the orator, he continued, “is the rough humor [*dicacitas scurrilis*] of the buffoon or the stage.”¹⁴³ The *De oratore* likewise recommended restraint in jesting [*in iocando moderatio*] and cautioned that the orator “must not let his jesting become buffoonery or mere mimicry.”¹⁴⁴ Plutarch acknowledged the hazards of humor in writing that “the readiness and sharpness of such wit [Cicero’s] seemed clever and well suited to the courts...[but] by giving it too free exercise he hurt the feelings of many and gained the reputation of being malicious.”¹⁴⁵ Humanists followed their classical models by recognizing the perils of language that others might construe as *dicacitas scurrilis*. Scurrilous language was, of course, one of the frequent accusations leveled in the provocation and reluctance *topos*.¹⁴⁶ Understanding the classical antecedents of humor in denigrating speech can help us move beyond shock at the way humor was used in

¹⁴² Cic., *De or.* 2.221-223. Nicolino Applauso, “Curses and Laughter: The Ethics of Political Invective in the Comic Poetry of High and Late Medieval Italy” (PhD diss., University of Oregon, 2010), 21-22, Proquest (ID: 749938952).

¹⁴³ Quint., *Inst.*, 6.3.7 and 29.

¹⁴⁴ Cic., *De or.* 2.237-239.

¹⁴⁵ Plut., *Cic.* 5.

¹⁴⁶ See pages 244-247.

sometimes savage ways.¹⁴⁷ Classical models left humanists with options. They could, as Guarino did, skewer their opponents with charming, clever wit, or they could, like Poggio, argue that their opponents warranted a more abusive form of humor.

In keeping with his reputation as a wit, Guarino injected *facetia* into his writing both to make himself appear pleasant and clever and to amplify his depiction of Niccoli the Fool. His invective was undoubtedly critical but, insofar as it tended to poke fun at Niccoli's expense instead of savaging him, was relatively mild. Guarino's wit was evident from the outset, when he expressed his desire to make his invective enjoyable reading.¹⁴⁸ He even opened with a joke: "You will recognize a philosopher of our time abounding in buffoonery (Whew! What did I say? No, you will recognize a pantomime of philosophers)! For as the Greek proverb says: What is funnier than that monkeys behave like humans?"¹⁴⁹ The gibe blurred the line between rational man and irrational beast, and Guarino used the contrast to frame his caricature of Niccoli as a fraud imitating—or aping—true scholars.¹⁵⁰ The ape imagery casts Niccoli as a buffoon worthy of mockery and indicates the playful tone Guarino maintained throughout the invective.

¹⁴⁷ See my discussion of the limitations of existing studies of invective, pages 225-230.

¹⁴⁸ Cf. Agaso's letter to Regius. Agaso writes that he is sending his friend something suitable for a jest. *Collectanea*, 364. Nihil adhuc quod nostra magnopere studia postulent comperi cum aut vulgaria sint aut illis abundes. Ne tamen vacuum et inanem sumpsisse legationem videar, aliquid quo iocari aut subirasceat liceat audias interim faxo.

¹⁴⁹ *IAP*, 34-41. Dabo autem operam ut haec tibi ioco voluptatique sint, dum ridiculosum nostri temporis philosophum hui quid dixi? immo philosophorum histrionem recognoscas. Nam ut in Graecorum proverbio est: quid iocundius, quam quod hominum est factitare simias? See notes 62 and 73 for the surrounding text.

Cf. *Philippic*, 21. Rutherford explains that pantomimes were often used as euphemisms for sodomites. Rho clearly attacked Panormita's sexuality, see note 129, but there is no evidence that Guarino intended that meaning against Niccoli.

¹⁵⁰ Early modern individuals, as discussed in the previous chapter, frequently expressed anxiety about their humanity and manhood through a consideration of an animal-other. The ape was a problem because of its closeness to humans. James Knowles, "'Can ye not tell a man from a marmoset?': Apes and Others on the Early Modern Stage," in *Renaissance Beasts: Of Animals, Humans, and Other Wonderful Creatures*, ed.

Guarino's wit is perhaps most evident in his use of puns and word play.¹⁵¹ His intent was to demonstrate a command of language which, as Cicero argued, could help raise a laugh and persuade the audience.¹⁵² Guarino frequently used puns in his personal letters, one of his favorites being the play between Cicero—the orator, as well as a sign of excellence—and *cicer*, the common chickpea.¹⁵³ He also toyed with the distinction

Erica Fudge (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2004), 138-163. Guarino also used the ape metaphor against an unnamed humanist who may have been Trebizond. See note 154.

Humanists had a precedent for the ape metaphor in Juvenal's fifth satire, where the lower-class characters are likened to monkeys dressed up like soldiers and forced to perform for rotten apples. Juv., 5.146-155. "The insignificant friends are served fungi of dubious quality... Your treat is a scabby apple—like the apple gnawed by the creature [a monkey] dressed up with shield and helmet on the Embankment, that in terror of the whip learns to hurl a javelin from the back of a shaggy she-goat." The translation is Braund's. *Juvenal and Persius*, ed. and trans. Susanna Morton Braund (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004). In her notes, Braund explains that the passage refers to a performing monkey, one of the various kinds of entertainment on the Embankment between the Esquiline and Colline gates. See also Kirk Freudenburg, *Satires of Rome: Threatening Poses from Lucilius to Juvenal* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 274-275; Ralph M. Rosen, *Making Mockery: The Poetics of Ancient Satire* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 241-242.

¹⁵¹ For a discussion of word play see Cic., *De or.* 2.253-257 and *Rhet. Her.* 1.10. Corbeill cites the oration against Verres as an example of Cicero's use of puns. Cicero likened Verres to a pig, noting the connection between his name and *verres*, an uncastrated boar. Cic., *Verr.* 2.4.57. Corbeill, *Controlling Laughter*, 78-80 and 91-96. Thomson writes at length about Guarino's use of puns. Thomson, 417-420.

¹⁵² Cic., *De or.* 2.235.

¹⁵³ A typical example occurs when Guarino hears that another had praised him as a "successor of Cicero." He replies jokingly that while Cicero is honey, he himself is a *cicer*. Guarino of Verona to Ugo Mazolato, Venice, 3 January 1416, in *Epistolario*, ed. Sabbadini, 93. Quod Parmensis noster, alter aetatis nostrae Priscianus, plurimam mihi salutem nuntiat, gaudeo magnopere idque non parvae adscribo gloriae meae 'conspicuis placuisse viris' eisque caritate ac benivolentia devinciri. Mi Ugo mi Ugo, 'tu das epulis accumbere divum,' quod illius viri iudicio et assertione Ciceronis successor sum; credo equidem ut qui ei maximum per intervallum succedam, ita tamen ut non minus quam a sole tenebrae distem. Desine credere ut quicquam mihi sit cum Cicerone commune; ego vere cicer, ille mel, ille suavitas, ille dulcedo.

Sometimes the pun appears without an explicit comparison to Cicero. Guarino of Verona to Omnebono Scola, Florence, 9 August 1412, in *Epistolario*, ed. Sabbadini, 29. Vale suavissime mi Omnebonum. Antonius Corbinellus hinc tibi salutem plurimam nuntiat. Habeo de Iuliano nostro Caesare, ut ipse iactat, sed potius Oleario Cicere lepidissimam narrationem, qui iudicia sua non legibus modo sed etiam ense discutit, clientes non verbis sed gladio castigat.

The Cicero/*cicer* pun appears in Agaso's letter against Trebizond. The use of one of Guarino's favored puns may lend credence to Trebizond's suspicions that Guarino had composed the letter. *Collectanea*, 364. Videre licet "adpresentiarum" pro "impresentiarum," "egritudinem" pro "morbo," "exorditus" pro "exorsus est," "infinitionem" pro "causa infinita," "a iuventute" pro "iuventa," "humanitatis doctrinas," id est, doctrine doctrinas, et alia milia que novus hic Cicero, vel cicer, magis sua quadam usurpat inscitia?

The pun had classical antecedents too. Plutarch wrote that Cicero's friends recommended he change his name because of it. Plut., *Cic.* 1.6; Corbeill, *Controlling Laughter*, 78-79.

between *orator*, the polished speaker, and *arator*, the common plowman.¹⁵⁴ Guarino's word play against Niccoli was almost gleeful. While mocking Niccoli's occupation with the window-trimmings of true learning, Guarino wondered whether he ought to call him a "man of books" [*librorum*] or "a librarian" [*librarius*], whether he was a man "imbued with letters" [*imbutus*] or "stupid" [*imbrutus*]. He quoted Horace to cast Niccoli's pursuits as foolish and worthless: "The mountains are in labor, and an absurd mouse will be born."¹⁵⁵ He then mocked Niccoli's "trifling work [*opusculum*], which he compiled to teach youths." Although entitled an *orthographia*, Guarino joked it could more accurately be called an *orbographia*, a compound suggesting the work was bereft [*orbis*] of value.¹⁵⁶

Guarino's initial joke likening Niccoli to a pantomime of philosophers also illustrates his humorous use of slipped speech.¹⁵⁷ This strategy involved first an author's

¹⁵⁴ Sabbadini and Rutherford note the word play in Cic., *Phil.* 3.9.22. Guarino used the pun to criticize an unnamed humanist in 1423. Thomson speculates that Guarino, who was in Verona at the time, was talking about Trebizond, who was in Venice. Guarino joked that the individual was "nearer a plowman than an orator." Note also another reference to the ape. Guarino of Verona to Hieronymus, Verona, 1 November 1423, in *Epistolario*, ed. Sabbadini, 384. *Risum commovisti illius hominis vel potius simulacri commemoratione, qui non tam summus quam simius doctor fieri cupit; est autem aratori quam oratori propior. Cf. Philippic, 156. Perabsurdum quidem! Non enim quantula uel ex parte orator sed arator (intellegin?) nominandus es quippe qui malus uir, immo sceleratus, atque dicendi imperitus es...*

¹⁵⁵ *IAP*, 113-122. *Intelligent alii et sensa pernoscant; huic satis est picturas depasci. Quanam hominem istum professione dignabimur? quem tandem appellabimus? librorum virum an librarium? litteris imbutum an imbrutum? Quanquam quid dissimulo proprium ei referre nomen et artis suae vocabulum? Cf. Hor., Ars. P. 139. See notes 113-114 for the surrounding text, including the reference to Horace.*

Cf. Philippic, 132. "Are we really envious that he promises daily to be on the verge of generating the highest mountains, Caucasus and Olympus, and then straightaway gives birth to croaking frogs or funny little mice?" Rutherford notes the connection to Horace.

¹⁵⁶ *IAP*, 158-171. *Proxime venit in manus ab eo editum in lucem opusculum, quod ille ad erudiendos compilavit adulescentes; inscribitur autem orthographia, cum verius orbographia possit appellari. Nam cum erudire pueros per quandam inanem iactantiam concupiscit, rudem sese magis puerum patefacit, tot in ea contra artis praecepta describuntur vocabula, ut correptas a natura syllabas diphthongis annotare non pudeat. See note 114 for the preceding text.*

¹⁵⁷ As an example of the classical use of the device, Thomson cites Cic., *Cael.* 32. *Quod quidem facerem vehementius, nisi intercederent mihi inimicitiae cum istius mulieris viro—fratre volui dicere; semper hic erro. Thomson, 633.*

claim that he inadvertently used the wrong word, a mistake with amusing consequences, and then an immediate correction. Guarino used slipped speech to label Niccoli a slanderer: “Let this Solon say, if he can, which learned men of his age he has not harried. What a snake [*coluber*—I meant to say ‘pillar’ [*columen*—of learning, and reviver of returning letters.”¹⁵⁸ The insult relied on similar-sounding words, like his puns, but added a component, the feigned accident of pronunciation. Guarino used the device again to make light of Niccoli’s book-collecting:

Certainly, if I saw that by the acquisition of many books erudition is also acquired, I would say these libraries ought to be called most learned and I would encourage this most excellent poison [*virus*—whew! I meant to say “person” [*vir*—not only to have several at home but to stroll around wrapped up in a cloak sewn of commentaries, so that he will be esteemed not only learned in letters [*litterosus*] but even book-laden [*librosus*].¹⁵⁹

The image of Niccoli wandering about clothed in the pages he thought made him wise is humorous in its own right and well-suited to Guarino’s caricature of Niccoli the Fool.

The manipulation of language added another layer of humor for a humanist audience that viewed clever word play as a part of being *facetus*. Guarino was not content to leave this image just yet, though, and proceeded to imply that everyone was aware of Niccoli’s foolishness [*ineptiae*]:

¹⁵⁸ *IAP*, 183-192. Dicat Solon iste, si potest, quos aetatis suae litteratos viros non carperit et aureo idest ventoso illo suo dicendi genere non detraxerit. O studiorum colubrum, columen ‘volui dicere,’ et redeuntium instauratorem litterarum. See notes 75 for the surrounding text.

¹⁵⁹ I follow Thomson’s rendering of *librosus* as book-laden to denote the image of Niccoli wearing his manuscripts. *IAP*, 411-425. Verum enimvero si parta librorum multitudine simul et eruditionem suscipi cernerem, ipsas in primis bibliothecas eruditissimas appellari dicerem oportere huncque bellissimum virus, hui! virum volui dicere, cohortarer ut non modo domi compluris haberet sed et conserto sibi ex commentariis amictu circumsaepus ambularet, quo non modo litterosus, verum etiam librosus putaretur. Quamvis quid simulatione opus est? undique se produnt ineptiae. Nam si quis Timothei tibias habuerit, cum nihil ex artis instituto modulari sciat, non idcirco hunc tibicinem esse dices; quin si quid canere aut ostentare conabitur, ‘Romani tollent equites peditesque cachinnum.’ Thomson, 640. Cf. Hor., *Ars. P.* 113.

Indeed if someone possesses the flutes of Timotheus, though he knows how to play nothing from instruction in the art, you would not for this reason call the man a flute player; no, if he tries to play anything or show off, “the Roman nobles and mobs will bellow with laughter.”¹⁶⁰

Merely owning the tools of an expert—whether books or flutes—does not make one an expert. The passage situated Niccoli at the center of another joke that everyone was in on.¹⁶¹ Guarino’s word play thus also reiterated the idea that it was only right to laugh at a foolish braggart and invited his audience to enjoy a good laugh at the expense of a fool.

Poggio’s use of humor was far more aggressive than Guarino’s playful caricature of Niccoli as a silly—albeit arrogant and abusive—monkey of a man. While Guarino’s humor was the wit of *facetia*, Poggio’s was the mordant *dicacitas*.¹⁶² The distinction is notable because Poggio accused Valla of the very same thing: scurrilous speech.¹⁶³ Poggio, however, framed his *dicacitas* as a deliberate response to the alleged abuse of his opponent. He claimed he was returning like for like, an implicit argument that he deemed Valla worthy of the harshest abuse.¹⁶⁴ To justify his own use of mordant humor, then, Poggio had to prove his opponent’s use of it. The concept of provocation was especially meaningful for Poggio, whose humor runs the gamut of insults to demonstrate how egregious were Valla’s breaches of propriety. In a characteristic passage, he accused Valla of *levitas*, *temeritas*, and *impudentia* before attacking him for daring to correct

¹⁶⁰ *Ostentare* could simply mean to display a piece and have a similar meaning to *cano*. Given Guarino’s numerous accusations about boasting I take *ostentare* to indicate that Niccoli is showing off. LSII.A.

¹⁶¹ Guarino had already established Niccoli’s public—or so he claims—failings, including his mistaking Latin for Greek and his inability to converse about the books in his collection. See pages 255-257.

¹⁶² See pages 267-269. Cic., *De or.* 2.218-219.

¹⁶³ See Poggio’s provocation defense, pages 246-247.

¹⁶⁴ See page 242-244. See too the account of Scaevola Crassus who “when encountering Brutus, whom he detested and deemed deserving of invective,” used more aggressive humor. Cic., *De or.* 2.222-223.

Cicero's eloquence with false and mordant wit [*falsa dicacitas*].¹⁶⁵ Like many of Poggio's characterizations of Valla, the passage focused Valla's madness and likened him to a *latrator* or *rabula* instead of true orator. On another occasion, Poggio criticized Valla's attacks on learned authorities as the foolish *dicacitas* of a "most indecorous *rabula*."¹⁶⁶ Amplifying Valla's cruelty freed Poggio to denigrate his opponent in creative ways. Some of his insults involved Valla himself, who boasts as if he were "boiling with the greatest fever" and "rejoices as if he had brought a new Phoenix from Arabia."¹⁶⁷ The phoenix, a symbol of exceptionalism, stood as a testament to Valla's arrogance.¹⁶⁸ In the same passage, Poggio ridiculed Valla's *Elegantiae* as "his bulwark and citadel" filled with verbosity and foolish loquacity. Poggio's humor reads as hyperbole designed to

¹⁶⁵ *Oratio* I, 197. O uesanam leuitatem. O temeritatem non ferendam. O impudentiam manifestam. Adeo ne Ciceronis fama, doctrina, eloquentia in extremum discrimen redijt, ut nescio quis furibundus, demens, insanus, indoctus, petulans audeat Ciceronis eloquentiam sua falsa dicacitate corrigere. Quod esse potest expressus, quod manifestius stulticiae signum, quam cuiquam Ciceronis eloquentiam non placere, quam audere ab eo dicta commutare, tanquam eloquentius dici possint. Atqui nullus hactenus hominum memoria repertus est qui id auderet, qui id tentaret. Valla latrator furibundus, conuitiator demens, rabula foraneus tandem nescio e quo gurgustio emersus, impetum facit in Ciceronem, quem omnes aureum fuisse flumen eloquentiae confitentur.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 203. Recensui pauca ex infinitis pene locis, in quibus illius iactatoris insania & uerbositas temeraria, uelut equus sine freno aut ratione uagatur, non quidem ut mihi desumerem defendendorum priscorum uirorum munus (quippe qui etiam taciti se defendunt, illorumque autoritas satis ex seipsa munita sit omnia gentium consensu, aduersum stultam rabulae importunissimi dicacitatem) sed ut tanta audacia, tanta impudentia stultissimae pecudis non esset ignota.

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 194. Nunc quoniam ignorantis beluae exhalantem foetorem paulum compressimus, sua si libet paulum consideremus, discutientes eos potissime libros, in quibus absque ulla aut uerborum, aut sententiarum elegantia huius abiectissimae pecudis stulticia est uagata. Opus aeditit Valla noster, uel potius castrorum dementiae Vallum, quod de elegantia, uel ignorantia potius latinae linguae appellauit, quod sibi tanquam propugnaculum & arcem constituit. In quam omnes suas copias, omnia sua praesidia inclusit, quo eius stulticia firmior ac tutior redderet. Multa illud uerbositate & stulta loquacitate tanquam boatu quodam ingenti repleuit, ut qui librum non legerint, existiment in eo aliquid tanta expectatione dignum contineri. Ipse certe ita tumet, ut terram parturire credas, ita se iactat, ac si maxima febri aestuaret, ita exultat, quasi ex Arabia nouum aduexerit foenicem. For the preceding text, see note 93.

¹⁶⁸ For similar imagery see pages 250-251. Cf. *Philippic*, 49. Would you like us to analyze and explain this error? Since he is called Antonio, the silly, insipid man gloats that these lines were just now sent to him as if (like a Phoenix) he were the only Antonio in the whole world.

demonstrate just how unforgivable were Valla's actions, to raise the stakes of the dispute, and to justify his own use of equally harsh language.

The chief example of Poggio's *dicacitas* and the culmination of his portrait of his opponent's arrogance and insanity is his description of Valla's triumphal parade.¹⁶⁹ The description of the triumph is filled with evocative imagery typical of Poggio's brand of humor and invective. It is also a sign that Poggio's humor is in the vein of classical satirists who employed the grotesque and ridiculous in denigrating others.¹⁷⁰ The premise is simple: if Valla thinks he is superior to all learned authorities, then Poggio is ready to "decree for him a triumph and laurel crown."¹⁷¹ Poggio intends the triumph to be both humorous and depressing. He places Valla "on a chariot constructed from the bones of giants, so that this *immanis* man will be carried on the strength of *immanes* bodies." *Immanis* may refer both to the physical size of the giants and to the monstrosity they share with Valla. Elephants will pull the chariot, "so that giant beasts will draw an even more giant beast." The emphasis on size is a tribute to Valla's overinflated ego and, perhaps, his monstrous treatment of others. The chariot must be made of the bones of giants, Poggio explains, because Valla deems the alternative, ivory, vulgar.¹⁷² Valla himself bears all the marks of the madness Poggio describes elsewhere. He will stand garbed in stinking pelts of goats, holding a sphinx in one hand and a phoenix in the other,

¹⁶⁹ Poggio returns to the triumph in subsequent invectives. In the third *Oratio*, Poggio chronicles Valla's march through Hell—where "he is invited by Satan and his demons to proclaim himself the grand heresiarch of Christianity, receiving from them lordship over all earthly knowledge and sciences." In the fourth *Oratio*, Valla "aspires to be counted among the immortals, to share in the glory of the blessed," but is expelled from the Elysian fields. Camporeale, "Poggio," 36-37. See also Rao, *Curmudgeons*, 92-93.

¹⁷⁰ Camporeale writes that Poggio's "need to dramatize this triumph of lunacy leads him to parody, to depict Valla as a full comical personage, bordering on the grotesque." Camporeale, "Poggio," 36.

¹⁷¹ *Oratio* I, 203. See note 104.

¹⁷² On the use of beasts and monsters to elevate satire see Maria Plaza, *The Function of Humour in Roman Verse Satire: Laughing and Lying* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 305-310.

“casting his mad eyes here and there.”¹⁷³ He will wear a laurel crown, a classical and humanist sign of excellence, on which is written in gold letters, “I am born of Folly.”¹⁷⁴

The attendants at Valla’s triumph are equally important parts of Poggio’s portrait of the triumph as both celebratory and funereal. Owls fly about, a sign of impending disaster, singing their funereal song [*carmen suum feral*].¹⁷⁵ As befits his arrogant nature, Valla forces gods and mythological creatures into service, grand figures whom Poggio uses to throw into greater relief Valla’s arrogance. Valla is a conquering hero, but his victory comes at the expense of all the gods and goddesses, learned men, and learning in general.¹⁷⁶ Those in attendance clearly do not want to be there. “All the muses stand around the chariot like slave girls speaking a hymn,” although “they seem to grieve the great insanity of the man rather than to sing.” Apollo is there, “melancholy, because he cannot make use of his art in honor of the triumph.” Athena is present, but only to drive away flies “lest they are a bother to her prophet [Valla].” She carries a very large book “stuffed with the riches of the conqueror” and entitled ‘The Riches of Folly’.¹⁷⁷ Next

¹⁷³ Another example of the use of mythical beasts to denote exceptionalism. See notes 167-168.

¹⁷⁴ *Oratio* I, 203-204. Currus itaque erit non ex ebore (nam id quidem uulgare uidet) sed ex Gigantum ossibus compactus, ut homo immanis immanium corporum robore uehatur. Non tepetibus, sed pellibus sternetur hircinis, triumphantis naturam redolentibus. Ipse adstans alteraque manu sphungem, altera foenicem gestans hallucinanti persimilis, oculosque fanaticos hac illac circumferens. Coronam gestabit in capite ex folijs lauri, decoctis lucanicis immixtis, ut aliquo suaui odore nauseantis comitum fastidio mens fessa reficiatur. Folij inscriptum literis aureis erit, stulticiae alumno. Elephantum currum ducent, quo beluae ingentes ingentiorum trahant... Ipse egregius Imperator grauitate illa elephantina, qui inanem laudem respuat, manu omnes admonebit, ut de suis laudibus parcius loquantur, remittant aliquid de cupiditate laudandi. I take Poggio’s spelling of *sphungem* as *sphingem*, the accusative singular of *sphinx*.

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 204. Noctuae ac bubones circumaduolabunt, carmen suum feral canentes.

¹⁷⁶ Cf. Plaza’s discussion of elevation and the use of grand personages. Plaza, 90-91 and 101-105

¹⁷⁷ *Oratio* I, 204. Circumstabunt in curru musae omnes uelut ancillae hymnum Apollini educatori gnati sui dicentes, sed uoce rauca & submissa, ut potius gemere ob tantam uiri insaniam quam canere uideantur. His aderunt proximiores cum cithara absque fidibus, quod eas mures correserint. Phoebusque moestus, quod arte sua uti nequeat in honorem triumphum. Pallas cum scuto & ense, quo muscas abigat, ne sint uati suo

come the most revered men of learning, “all the grammarians, the historians, the poets, the theologians, who on account of this demented triumph will cry out in grief.” Mythical creatures follow, including centaurs who, in keeping with the themes of madness and folly, bear banners identifying the procession as the “Roving Kingship of Fools.” Understood in a pejorative sense and fitting with Poggio’s conqueror motif, though, the participants of the triumph clearly consider Valla’s *regnum* a tyranny. The liberal arts are there as well, though unhappily “will complain they were pimped.” Perhaps the most depressing attendants, particularly for the early modern reader, are the boys spouting a variety of Valla’s barbarisms and solecisms.¹⁷⁸ These children represent for Poggio the consequences of Valla’s arrogance. If left in Valla’s hands, the future for learning is bleak indeed. The universal disapproval evident in the attendants adds dramatic tension to Poggio’s invective. The triumph is both comedic and tragic, laughable and disheartening.

The ridiculous triumph is Poggio’s analysis of Valla writ large and epitomizes the methods he uses in wielding invective. The description of the triumph is at first shocking in its savagery. This likely accounts for the moralizing, condemnatory conclusions of Poggio’s character evident even in recent accounts of the Poggio-Valla conflict.¹⁷⁹

molestae. Minerua librum pergrandem super humeris gestabit opibus triumphantis refertum, cuius inscriptio erit, stulticiae copia.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid., 204. Aristoteles in primis, Albertus magnus, caeterique philosophi ab hoc uno emendati. Tum M. Varro, M. Tullius, Salustius, Lactantius, Grammatici omnes, Historici, Poetae, Theologi, qui ob triumphantem dementiam lamententur. Post hos curru proximiores satyri faunisque sequuntur: Sileni sui auribus in psalterio & cymbalis plaudentes. Hos inter psallentium modo permixti erunt asini, tibicinum loco rugitu magno sonoroque, ac etiam uentris crepitibus triumphantis famam & gloriam tollentes, ut & plausu, risuque gestire & laeta esse omnia videantur. Centauri quoque aderunt uexilla deferentes, in quibus inscriptum erit: Stultorum regnum peruagatum. Hunc longe post comitabuntur liberales artes, quae se ab hoc uestano non ornatas, sed prostitutas querentur. Puerorum quoque turba aderit balbutientium nescio quid rusticum magno comitatu barbarismorum ac folcecismorum, quorum inueniendorum hic autor fuerit permaximus.

¹⁷⁹ See for instance Ennio Rao’s description of the Poggio-Valla feud as the “high-water mark” of humanist invective and his assessment of Poggio. Rao, 96-97.

Indeed, Poggio's description of Valla's triumph is far more scathing than Guarino's caricature of Niccoli or any of Trebizond's invectives. Beneath the vitriol, however, Poggio's strategies were consistent with classical models of blame. Instead of reading his invective as evidence of his bad character, a more accurate reading situates the piece in a consideration of the classical guidelines that governed the use of humor. To do otherwise is to judge the work by standards foreign to those of its author and audience.

Conclusion

As fiery and savage as humanist quarrels could be they eventually all found their end. In the case of Guarino and Niccoli, there is evidence of their reconciliation as early as September 1417. Guarino's letters indicate the public nature of their dispute as well as their public reconciliation made possible by the intervention of mutual friends. To Niccoli, Guarino wrote that he had heard from various sources, including a letter Niccoli had written to Francesco Barbaro, that he no longer bore Guarino ill-will. While his 1413 invective had emphasized Niccoli's cruelty and abuse of friends, Guarino now fondly remembered Niccoli's courtesy [*comitas*] and humanity [*humanitas*]. He articulated his desire to put the quarrel, which he attributed to ill fate more than to the fault of either man, behind them, and to preserve and strengthen their friendship in the future.¹⁸⁰ The letter was Guarino's attempt to reengage with Niccoli by means of the language of friendship [*amicitia*], language he used the following month as well in a letter to

¹⁸⁰ Guarino of Verona to Niccolò Niccoli, Venice, September 1417, in *Epistolario*, ed. Sabbadini, 149-150. Superioribus diebus primum <ab ***>, deinde ab Antonio Cor <binello> nostro et nunc denique litteris tuis vere 'melle dulcioribus,' quas ad Barb<arum> meum dedisti, certior factus sum, et maxima quidem laetitia, me tecum in gratiam redisse; quod mihi facillimum persuasu extitit tuam illam summam comitatem ac humanitatem pari coniunctam benivolentiae recordanti...Adeo ut quicquid turbulentum interciderit, invido magis cuidam fato amoris nostro impendenti, quam ulli nostrae culpa imputari obsignarique conveniat...Enitar, 'pro virili parte' ut ingravescentibus annis et noster una ingravescat amor et simul auctius consenescat. Cf. Cic., *p. Sest.* 138.

Ambrogio Traversari. He assured Traversari, a mutual friend, that he would work to make his friendship [*amicitia*] with Niccoli “endure inviolate,” and that “as much as I am able, [I] will apply every care, the hardest work, and eagerness to not only conserving this friendship, but in fact growing it.”¹⁸¹ Guarino wrote again to Niccoli in November 1417, expressing disappointment that his friend had not visited him in northern Europe. He grieved that they could have toured the landscape together and that he could have benefitted from Niccoli’s expertise in ancient ruins and histories.¹⁸² Guarino praised in this November letter the very things he had criticized in his 1413 *IAP* as superficial. In December and January, Guarino, who had earlier mocked Niccoli’s self-appointed role as arbiter of learning, even appealed to Niccoli to lend his support for a friend, Gian Nicola Salerno, to become chief magistrate of Florence. He asked Niccoli to look after Salerno “as you are accustomed to do for friends,” commenting that the man is “worthy of your friendship [*amicitia*].”¹⁸³

¹⁸¹ Guarino of Verona to Ambrogio Traversari, Venice, 4 October 1417, in *Epistolario*, ed. Sabbadini, 152. De reditu nostro in gratiam, Nicolai inquam et mei, magna te affectum laetitia dicis. Credo equidem idque mihi facile persuadeo, haud ignarus quam aegre ferres mutuam illiam disiunctionem vel amoris intermissionem. Nihil autem gratius ac iocundius te facere posse credito quam, id quod facturum polliceris, ut amicitia nostra inviolata perduret. Ego quantum in me est, de ea non modo conservanda verum etiam augenda, quemadmodum ab initio semper feci, omnem curam operam diligentiam studium praestabo.

¹⁸² Guarino of Verona to Niccolò Niccoli, Venice, 28 November 1417, in *Epistolario*, ed. Sabbadini, 160. Dolebam quod hoc temporis, quo tibi procul a patria ut sic dicam fugiendum erat, nobiscum non consumpsisses, ut ex fuga tam maesta iocundum quandam et amoenam peregrinatiunculam effecisses, ex qua tantos una fructus decerpere licebat, ut huius semper temporis meminisse possemus. Nihil ex hisce regionibus indiscussum inaccessumque dimittere constitueramus, non montes non agros non flumina non lacus non aequora, non ulla iacentium ruinarum reliquias, in quibus revisendis omnem antiquitatem omnes annales omnia monumenta revidissemus eruissemus: tu praesertim, cui superiores aetates, civitatum historiae, res gestae populorum ante oculos ad unguem propositae sunt.

¹⁸³ Guarino of Verona to Niccolò Niccoli, Venice, 27 December 1417, in *Epistolario*, ed. Sabbadini, 171. Id autem ut assequi possit te magnum adiumentum afferre posse scio, si modo, uti pro amicis soles, advigilaveris: non ignoro quid in omni re possis cum tuam excutis vigilantiam cogitationem consilium; Guarino of Verona to Niccolò Niccoli, Venice, 2 January, 1418, in *Epistolario*, ed. Sabbadini, 174. Nuper ad te scripsi pro quodam d. Iohanne Nicola contrerraneo meo, equestris ordinis viro clarissimo, qui praetura ambire florentinam statuit. Dii boni! quid hominis est, doctus gravis facilis; quid plura? tua

Poggio and Valla enjoyed no such reconciliation. The direct conflict between the two ended when Poggio became chancellor of Florence in 1453, but he continued to seethe even though the two were no longer colleagues. To Bartholomeo Ghiseldardi, Poggio wrote of his hope that the *insania* of Valla—a petulant ass and detractor of all learned men—was public knowledge. He maintained his earlier accusation that Valla “boasts so about himself that he places himself ahead of all ancient writers,” and wrote of his hope that his orations against the man be seen by all.¹⁸⁴ In 1454, he made clear to Pietro Tommasi, one of a handful who tried to bring the two together, that reconciliation was impossible: “What good man can be a friend to Valla, that fanatic, buffoon, slanderer, boaster, heretic, that insulting detractor of the learning of all the most brilliant men, present and past?”¹⁸⁵ Poggio added that his words were not sufficient to subdue Valla—a perverse animal, stubborn, and stupid—and recommended prison and whips instead. Poggio even suggested that Valla deserved to be burnt at the stake.¹⁸⁶ Both men died a few years later, Valla in 1457 and Poggio in 1459.

This chapter has demonstrated that invective was one of the preferred vehicles for humanist self-presentation and that authors drew from classical models to help

dignus est amicitia. Commendo rem suam tibi ac tuis in maiorem modum, ut iam nunc de ea sermones spargere incipias.

¹⁸⁴ The letter is undated but written from Florence. Harth ed., *Lettere*, 3:220-221. Cupio enim has vulgari ut nota fiat insania illius asini petulantis communis doctorum omnium detractoris. Vide quam perversa ac facinorosa sit illius natura. Nunquam desistit ab excellentium virorum objurgatione!...se autem ita jactabat et efferebat, ut omnibus antiquis scriptoribus anteponeret...Sed alias, si causam dabit, utar graviore medela, quam eleboro ad purgandam levissimi cerebelli insaniam. Vellem igitur has orationes omnibus esse notas.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid., 3:292. Si mihi amicus esset, reicerem talis monstri omnem non solum amicitiam, sed vite consuetudinem abscinderemque a me omnem eam corporis partem, que mihi suam benevolentiam suaderet. Nam qui vir bonus posset amicus esse Valle, fanatico, scurre, maledico, iactatori, heretico, omnium clarissimorum doctrina virorum tum presentium, tum preteritorum detractori contumelioso?

In addition to Tommasi, Francesco Barbaro and Francesco Filelfo, who himself had since reconciled with Poggio, tried to reconcile the two. Camporeale, “Poggio,” 30.

¹⁸⁶ Celenza, *Lost*, 130. Camporeale, “Poggio,” 31.

negotiate fifteenth-century life. As a literary genre, invective allowed humanists to construct positive, praiseworthy accounts of themselves and to denigrate their opponents. Self-aggrandizement and denigration were primary concerns because of the significance that public perception had on humanist careers. Humanist literary attacks were fundamentally about audience and invective had very real consequences. Guarino's feud with Niccoli, for instance, led him to leave his teaching position at the Florentine *Studio*.

The present chapter also marks a fitting conclusion to the broader study of George of Trebizond's disputes with Guarino and Poggio. Like Poggio, Filelfo, and others, Trebizond has long had a reputation as bitter, resentful, angry, and morose. Previous chapters have challenged this reputation by demonstrating how Trebizond used the same kinds of verbal strategies—related to restraint and manhood, for instance—as his opponents. The actions for which he is often negatively characterized were in fact more consistent with how scholars comported themselves in the fifteenth century than has been acknowledged. The present consideration of the form and function of invective brings this argument into sharper focus and the addition of new voices helps contextualize Trebizond's career and modes of expression.

I have argued that Marsh's observation that "the violent language of [Petrarch's] invectives will shock readers" is indicative of a long-term analytical problem in Renaissance studies.¹⁸⁷ The shock that Marsh describes has colored the reading of Renaissance source material and our understanding of the humanist experience for centuries. This was certainly the case for nineteenth-century figures such as William Shepherd and John Addington Symonds, who viewed the savagery of humanist invective as a puzzling practice difficult to square with a movement that articulated goals ranging

¹⁸⁷ Marsh, xi.

from eloquence to virtue. Even some recent accounts, for example that of Ennio Rao, continue to express surprise at and criticize humanist polemicists. Today, as invective receives greater attention and the texts themselves become more readily available, it is time to move past the shock that has shaped portrayals of humanism and humanists. Doing so can help us situate invective in its proper context, the socio-economic realities that defined the competitive, professional world of humanist scholars. It can also help us revise our understanding of particular authors, Trebizond included. Trebizond was hardly unique in the kinds of literary attacks he waged, and others were more than his match in terms of vitriol. Though relatively restrained during his conflict with Trebizond, Poggio was far less restrained in his feuds with Filelfo and Valla. His lengthy description of Valla's triumph is a hyperbolic portrayal of his opponent that not only adopts themes also evident in Trebizond's quarrels, but takes them to new lengths.

Ultimately, the problems associated with reading humanist invective and the impact these problems have had on the portrayal of specific humanists as historical figures suggests that, on some level, humanists were successful in their use of invective. They managed to make their opponents appear dishonest, dishonorable, immoderate, and imprudent. They were so successful in defaming each other, in fact, that posterity still remembers them as a contentious, angry, disenfranchised bunch. To lean too heavily upon this impression, however, flattens our understanding of the pressures exerted upon scholars, the anxiety they dealt with on a daily basis, and the expectations that guided their actions as inheritors of the classical oratorical tradition. Reducing invective to a mere matter of objective morality obscures the nuances of the broader humanist experience.

CHAPTER SIX

EPILOGUE

As the preceding chapters have demonstrated, humanists of early Quattrocento Italy were perpetually concerned with honor. Their correspondence was rife with discussions about reputation. They consistently strove to present themselves as erudite, eloquent, and virtuous. They were also a contentious bunch that frequently engaged in literary quarrels over perceived offenses and supposed damage to their reputations. Early fifteenth-century humanism was, as Christopher Celenza has noted, naturally agonistic.¹ Competition for patronage increased as the *studia humanitatis* gained in popularity. Competition bred anxiety and conflict, and for good reason. Scholars who succeeded in cultivating a reputation reaped the financial rewards. Guarino of Verona enjoyed years of success under the Este family and its scion, his pupil Leonello. He earned a salary of 300 ducats once he became a public lecturer in Ferrara in 1435. In the 1450s, Poggio owned a family palazzo, a country estate, nineteen pieces of land, several farms, two houses in Florence, and significant banking deposits.² Monfasani reports that after George of Trebizond entered the papal service in 1440 “one result of his new found financial security was the purchase of a young female slave...for the relatively high price of 60 florins.” Trebizond was not wrong in thinking that his new position afforded him financial flexibility. Between 1440 and his departure to Naples in 1452 Trebizond

¹ Christopher S. Celenza, *The Lost Italian Renaissance: Humanists, Historians, and Latin's Legacy* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004), 130.

² Stephen Greenblatt, *The Swerve: How the World Became Modern* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2011), 22; Lauro Martines, *The Social World of Florentine Humanists, 1390-1460* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1963), 123-127.

amassed 4,000 florins. He returned to Rome in 1455 and within three years he had purchased a large house in the center of the city.³ Nor were the individuals examined in the present study alone in their success. Coluccio Salutati's wealth was in the "upper 2 per cent of the city's [Florence] population" in 1427. Leonardo Bruni was worthy 2,700 florins at that time, not including his town and country homes. When Bruni—who had served as Florentine chancellor and apostolic secretary during his life—died in March 1444, his family controlled nine farms and seven houses.⁴ There were certainly socio-economic benefits for scholars able to navigate patronage systems and thus concrete consequences for humanist contests of honor and reputation.

The present study has investigated humanist contests of honor to determine *how* and *why* humanists engaged in disputes as they did and to establish a richer understanding of humanist social practices. What, then, does a study of Trebizond's feuds—and the feuds of his rivals, Guarino and Poggio—tell us about the means at humanists' disposal when competing with their rivals? There was a shared language and set of verbal strategies scholars used, as Celenza has noted, in an oppositional manner to praise themselves and denigrate others. Humanists employed a language of honor that was dependent upon ethical considerations. Allegedly immoral behavior provided fodder for attacks against an opponent. Contrary to many modern accounts—ranging from the nineteenth-century to the twenty-first century—humanist quarrels were not all-for-nothing free-for-alls. Humanists adapted the Roman forensic model to contemporary

³ John Monfasani, *George of Trebizond: A Biography and a Study of his Rhetoric and Logic* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1976), 114-115.

⁴ Martines, 105-108 and 117-123.

needs.⁵ They replaced the courtroom with the court of public opinion where individual honor was won or lost and where their contemporaries played the role of judge and jury. Humanists adapted classical models for different purposes. Sometimes they tried to establish a reputation by casting themselves as more learned than current respected educators, as Trebizond did in his *RLV* criticisms of Guarino. Sometimes they tried to mitigate damage done to their reputation or to regain lost honor, as Trebizond did after his chancery fight with Poggio. They often employed the language of honor in response to perceived slights, as Andreas Agaso's defense of Guarino or Poggio's oration against Lorenzo Valla illustrate. The present study makes clear that scholars understood the challenges facing them as professionals. They were well aware that reputation played a crucial role in their pursuit of financial success and popular approbation, and they believed themselves capable of influencing public perception. Humanists viewed themselves as active agents in the construction of their public identities.

The feuds of Trebizond, Guarino, and Poggio also reveal the wealth of concepts and language available to humanists in contesting honor. An analysis of their use of language deepens our understanding of humanist social practices. The similarities in the modes of expression these three men used are striking. Chapters Two, Three, and Four have demonstrated how the Trebizond-Guarino and Trebizond-Poggio feuds each had a language of their own unique to the circumstances of each dispute that each author wielded as part of a public battle for status and reputation. The Trebizond-Guarino dispute was defined by the anti-Greek language of the Agaso letter which led to Agaso—Guarino?—and Trebizond issuing insults contrasting eloquence and loquaciousness as

⁵ Ennio I. Rao, *Curmudgeons in High Dudgeon: 101 Years of Invectives (1352-1452)* (Messina: EDAS, 2007), 20. Rao argues that invective became increasingly severe as the fifteenth century progressed and as authors became willing to employ any and all means to denigrate their opponents.

well as *gravitas* and *levitas*. The chancery fight defined the Trebizond-Poggio dispute, which was fought via a language of restraint. Categories related to prudence, honesty, and forgiveness dominated the conversation. The use of gendered language was notable in both feuds. Casting an opponent as childish, womanly, or beast-like in their learning or behavior allowed an author to denigrate his opponent as unlearned and irrational while demonstrating his own rational manhood. The themes that emerge from each of these feuds provides insights into the kinds of issues humanists targeted in their invective—learning and moral conduct—and the language and paired categories they used to access those issues—eloquence and loquaciousness, *gravitas* and *levitas*, prudence and imprudence, honesty and dishonesty, man and child, woman, or beast.

Humanists surely relied on similar concepts but they also structured their invectives in similar ways. The structural components of invective explored in Chapter Five—provocation, the standard classical categories of insults, wit and humor—are evident in the Guarino-Niccoli and Poggio-Valla conflicts as well as in Trebizond's compositions. Guarino and Poggio justified their use of denigrating language by arguing they had been provoked by their opponents. Functionally, Trebizond's claims to Leonello d'Este or Guarino himself that Guarino's composition of the Agaso letter had provoked him are no different. Guarino, Poggio, and Trebizond all used insults reflecting the classical categories of *corpus*, *animus*, and *res externa*. Insults of an opponent's *animus* were particularly abundant. Guarino and Poggio attacked Niccoli and Valla for boasting and arrogance. Agaso accused Trebizond of believing himself a new Cicero. Trebizond's allegations against Poggio were rooted in his opponent's alleged *perturbationes animi*. Wit and humor abounded in each of these feuds, whether in the milder humor of Guarino

casting Niccoli as a big-eared monkey of a man or the harsher satirical humor of Poggio's triumph for Valla. For his part, Trebizond boasted his eloquence was so great that he, like a mailed knight on a charger, would topple Guarino.

The similarities in the content and structure of the verbal strategies of Trebizond, Guarino, and Poggio ultimately suggest the importance of carefully considering how we read humanist polemics and talk about their authors. In the end, what are we to make of those humanists who composed invectives and quarreled with others? Trebizond engaged in a number of feuds during his career and developed a reputation as bitter, morose, and angry that remains with him to this day. Might we consider Trebizond's reputation well-earned given his proclamation that he would topple Guarino with the force of his eloquence, as though he were mounted on a charger and Guarino were seated on a donkey? Might we condemn Trebizond for calling Guarino a "donkey-driver" or likening Poggio to a beast? Perhaps. The present study has indicated, though, that Trebizond's interactions with Guarino and Poggio were largely consistent with the customs of fifteenth-century letter-writing, invective, and self-presentation. Maybe, then, Trebizond simply went too far in his attacks. Certain humanists were surely milder than others, as a comparison of the Guarino-Niccoli and Poggio-Valla invectives indicates. Even on a comparative basis, though, Poggio's use of beast-like imagery against Valla was far more evocative and aggressive than Trebizond's attacks of Guarino or Poggio. Poggio frequently characterized Valla as an *insana belua*, called him a beast forever grazing on the fields of stupidity, and devoted a significant portion of his first *Oratio* to detailing Valla's mad triumph.

I have argued that a more fruitful way of reading humanist invective and understanding scholarly quarrels is to view them against a backdrop of humanist anxiety and professional competition. Accusations of loquaciousness, a lack of learning, or of immoral conduct, such as those that Guarino and Poggio leveled against Trebizond, carried a great deal of weight among erudite scholars and their patrons. They were all serious charges that could do real damage to an individual's reputation. Such charges provoked responses from humanists eager to defend their honor. Moreover, scholars articulated their responses in as forceful a language as the charges themselves were delivered. To read humanist invective as a function of the nature or character of individual humanists limits our insights into the contextual factors that compelled authors to compose invective and that guided the tools they used to do so. It distracts from the fact that humanists were drawing on a wealth of classical models to appeal to a public audience and influence popular perception. It oversimplifies the meaning in invective texts and ultimately flattens our understanding of humanism and humanists in the early Quattrocento.

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